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MEDITATIONS ON CHRISTIAN DOGMA

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MEDITATIONS ON CHRISTIAN DOGMA

Imprimatur.

HERBERTUS CARDINALIS VAUGHAN,
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Die 5 *Junii*, 1898

MEDITATIONS

ON

CHRISTIAN DOGMA

BY THE

RIGHT REV. JAMES BELLORD, D.D.

LATE CHAPLAIN TO H.B.M. FORCES

TITULAR BISHOP OF MILEVIS

AUTHOR OF "THE EUCHARISTIC MONTH OF HOLY SCRIPTURE," "OUTLINES OF MEDITATIONS," "A NEW CATECHISM OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE," ETC.

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY LETTER
FROM THE CARDINAL ARCHBISHOP OF WESTMINSTER

THIRD EDITION.

VOL I.

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INTRODUCTORY LETTER

BY

HIS EMINENCE

THE CARDINAL ARCHBISHOP OF WESTMINSTER.

Dear Father Bellord,

I am glad to learn that you have given us in an English dress, and in a somewhat reduced bulk, *La Théologie Affective*, by Louis Bail. I have known this work for many years. It was recommended to me by one of the most intellectual men of his day, who used it continually in preference to any other meditation book. Its great merit seems to be that it is Dogmatic Theology brought home to the heart and affections. St. Thomas and the Schoolmen gave us Theology as a pure dry light; they addressed the intellect, not the affections. This was wise and necessary. Their object was not directly ascetical or devotional, but doctrinal. They supposed that when they had thoroughly illumined a man's mind, and put his reason and memory into possession of the truths of Theology, he would then himself meditate on them, and feed his will and affections upon the solid food of truth

The work accomplished by Bail in the *Théologie Affective* has been in the past widely recognized and

highly appreciated ; and I have no doubt but that the two handy books into which you have judiciously decided to compress the five volumes of the French original will obtain a large circulation both in England and America, and will take a high place among our ascetical works.

While you have given us a valuable Journal of Meditation, you have placed before the public a compendious and profound course of Dogmatic Theology.

May God bless your endeavour to illumine and sanctify many souls.

Your faithful and devoted Servant,

HERBERT CARD. VAUGHAN.

1*st May*, 1898.

PREFACE.

I.

In these meditations an attempt is made to present, in a form adapted to the present day, a popular and devotional summary of the immense treasures contained in Catholic Theology. Professed Theologians have almost universally addressed themselves to the leisured and learned, and treated their subject in a strictly scientific manner. Dogmatic Theology has therefore come to be spoken of as an arid technical science, and one that is more likely to extinguish than to nurture spirituality. One of the first who undertook to develop side by side the intellectual and devotional aspects of Christian Dogma was the Seraphic Doctor, St. Bonaventure. The same idea inspired Vincent Contenson of the Order of Preachers, in his *Theologia Mentis et Cordis*. In two important works which still enjoy the widest repute, the *Elevations on the Mysteries*, and the *Meditations on the Gospels*, Bossuet set forth briefly a popular exposition of the principal mysteries of religion. Père d'Argentan, a Capuchin, is the author of three standard works on the Grandeurs of God, of Jesus Christ, and of the Blessed Virgin. In later times various writers have published abridgments of theology, and of St. Thomas' *Summa* in particular. All these works, how-

ever, notwithstanding their high excellence, do not exhaust the great subject in all its bearings, they still leave something to be desired. The great vogue they enjoyed testifies to the craving of the educated for doctrinal instruction of a solid character, free from the trammels of technicalities, and it encourages the hope that the faithful will welcome a new attempt in the same direction.

There is one work which, without rising to the height of those already mentioned, has certain special advantages which they do not present. It is more complete and methodical than some of them, and better adapted than others for general devotional use. The author was Louis Bail of Abbeville, said by Moreri to have been of English descent; he flourished in the seventeenth century, was a Doctor of the Sorbonne, Penitentiary of Paris, and Curé of Montmartre. The most notable of his productions was *La Théologie Affective, ou St. Thomas en Méditation.* The first edition appeared in 1638, and was followed by four or six others before the author's death in 1669. There was another French edition in 1671, and a Latin one in 1672. All these were in folio. After this no more is heard of the book till 1845, when the Abbé Chévéreau, Vicar General of Le Mans, brought out a revised and amended version in five volumes octavo. It was well received, and two or three further editions appeared during the next twelve years. It has been long out of print; the latest edition appears to have been that

of 1857; and it has now become scarce and expensive.

The characteristics of the *Affective Theology* are that it takes in regular order every one of the treatises contained in the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas Aquinas; that it divides them conveniently into portions, each complete in itself and subdivided into three points; that it presents these as meditations, with fitting applications and affections; and that by these means it changes an abstract and technical study into a devotional and practical exercise. In the words of the Abbé Chévéreau, "The subjects are treated with a method, a breadth of view, a depth of thought and sweetness of sentiment, which ought to have rescued the work long ago from the dust of ancient libraries. The intellect and the heart, science and piety have much to learn from it. There is in this book, too little known in these days, a philosophy of faith, an exposition of scientific theology, and a savour of piety that are truly admirable."

There is probably, among the great multitude of religious books, no other that covers exactly the same ground as the *Affective Theology*. The present epoch of renewed Christian vigour and expansion has produced many popular expositions of religious doctrine, and many solid manuals for meditation, but no one, perhaps, that combines the two things in the same way as Louis Bail's great work. Such a book, accommodated to the requirements and couched in the language of the present day, is calculated to be

useful as an easy hand-book to those who wish to study the scientific bases of Christianity; to preachers and teachers, as a convenient summary and classification of the knowledge which they already possess; and as new material for the devout who wish to go more deeply into the *scientia sanctorum* in their meditations.

The *Théologie Affective*, however, as it at present stands, is not fully available for its purposes. The tongue in which it is written conceals it from a large section of the reading public of the world. But, besides this, it has other shortcomings which would prevent it from coming into very general use at the present day. It is too bulky, extending as it does to five volumes of 500 pages each. The style is antiquated, leisurely, and diffuse; and the separate meditations often run to such a length, that they cease to be meditations or available for meditations, and become rather dissertations or sermons. The author further dwells upon the refutation of many dead and forgotten heresies, and discusses scholastic subtleties that now have hardly even an archæological interest; and, where the realm of nature touches on that of grace, "he indulges in a thousand applications, a thousand affections founded on the science of a bygone age" (Chévéreau), which necessitate very considerable modifications. Since his time the mental landscape has undergone great changes; large tracts have been submerged, others have been elevated from the depths; many

questions have lost their actuality, new ones have become urgent ; new objections have been brought against religion, old truths need to be set forth in a different form ; a large body of new illustrative facts or laws have been revealed by natural science. In short the *Affective Theology* labours under the disadvantage of being a book of the seventeenth century and not of the twentieth. M. Chévéreau fully recognizes that many defects remain in the work notwithstanding the improvements he had introduced ; he recognizes that its utility is still limited to the few, and he addresses it principally to priests and ecclesiastical students. He considers that his recension is only a temporary expedient, and he hopes that it may prove to be the basis of a more finished work.

It long ago occurred to the present writer that some sort of reduction of Louis Bail's work would be peculiarly useful. His idea in beginning these volumes was simply to condense the original meditations, but he soon realized that it would be necessary to write a practically new book, though on the basis of Bail. He has taken the framework or skeleton of the present work from the *Théologie Affective*, keeping in the main to the order of the treatises and the division into meditations ; but, as regards the substance of the meditations, he has allowed himself the widest latitude, and makes no pretence of following Bail closely, although using his material freely as occasion served. A certain number of the meditations are condensations of the original ones ; a good many are based on Bail,

but completely recast; many more are quite new or derived from other sources. Amongst the obligations that have to be acknowledged are the following: Almost the whole of Treatise VI. on the Blessed Virgin has been adapted from *La Vierge Marie dans les Evangiles*, by Auguste Nicolas The meditations on the Creation of the world in Treatise IV. are from notes of a work by Dominic McCausland on that subject. Certain ideas of Lacordaire, not easy to specify, run through many of the meditations on the Trinity, the Fall, the Incarnation and Redemption; in particular, Meditations 4 and 5 of Treatise II., The Trinity, and Meditation 5 of Treatise V., The Incarnation, are summaries of certain Conferences of Notre Dame. Meditation 45 of Treatise V. is from a review in the *Tablet* (April, 1871) of a work by Dr. Stroud, *The Physical Cause of the Death of Christ.* In Treatise VIII., Human Acts, the second point of Meditation 5, and the third point of Meditation 17 are derived from passages in Max Nordau's *Degeneration.* Certain ideas in the same treatise, and perhaps elsewhere, have been suggested by Mr. Benjamin Kidd's *Social Evolution*, and one has been taken, almost verbally, from Herbert Spencer.

As it is possible that these Meditations may be utilized as material for sermons, it may be well to anticipate a criticism that will probably be passed. Louis Bail appended to the *Affective Theology* a Table which assigns certain meditations to the Sundays and Festivals of the year. This has been studiously con-

sidered and omitted. The Epistles and Gospels of the Sacred Liturgy are not directly elucidated in these meditations ; failing that, it seemed to the author that such a Table is rather a limitation than an aid to one's choice. About half the meditations may be easily adapted to any given Sunday, and any given meditation may be adapted to about half the Sundays of the year. As for the ecclesiastical seasons and chief festivals, the treatises corresponding to them will supply a number of appropriate subjects without the aid of any table.

It only remains for me to express my deep gratitude to the Rev. Dr. Gildea, the Censor of Vol. I., for many valuable corrections and suggestions ; and to the Rev. Dr. Surmont, the Censor of Vol. II., for a similar kindness

II.

The question of a suitable method of meditation is one that is not without importance. The same procedure is not adapted to every mind, or every country, or every class of persons. The leisured and the busy, the practised and the unpractised, the imaginative and the prosaic, the lovers of simplicity or of elaborate organization, will not find themselves able to treat the same materials in the same way. According to the nature of the different subject-matter, a particular system of treatment will prove to be sometimes appropriate and sometimes the reverse. In preparing the

present work the author has constantly had in view the method which is known as the Sulpician. As Father Faber remarks in one of his works, this is the traditional system which has been handed down in the Church, and it is probably much the same as that which prevailed amongst the ancient ascetics. In this method there are three simple mental operations :—

1. The consideration of the subject with regard to God.

2. The consideration of it with regard to self.

3. The reduction of these considerations to practice by means of prayers and resolutions.

Under each of these headings a few devotional acts are suggested in general terms. An introduction and a conclusion are also added.

The author ventures to think, under correction, that this method will be found to be the best adapted to the character of the meditations in this series. They are mostly such as do not lend themselves readily to the pictorial representation required for the "Composition of Place," or to the same treatment as suits the concrete events of the Gospel history. Some of them seem to be unpromising of devotional results, as in the case of the separate works of the days of Creation; others are highly abstruse, such as the eternity of God, the relations in the Trinity, the operation of divine grace ; many may appear to be devoid of any practical element. Upon the Sulpician system even such subjects may be turned to profitable account

by developing the first section, considering them chiefly in regard to God and for the information of the intellect, and dwelling more particularly on acts of adoration, wonder and gratitude.

For those who have not enjoyed a systematic training in the intricacies of meditation, or who have only a short or an interrupted interval to devote to it, there is great advantage in a method that is natural and consecutive, with few and simple divisions, that is easily carried in the mind, and easily applied by a novice in the art. There is not so much in this method as to bewilder or fatigue the mind, yet it contains all that is essential to a complete meditation, and quite enough for the usual half-hour or hour. There are many who will appreciate the fact that the Sulpician method is more objective than subjective ; that the mind is led directly to the matter to be meditated, and not distracted by the consideration of its own faculties, and senses, and the exercise of each of these in order.

The long developments in the way of affections and applications as given by Louis Bail have been entirely omitted. This will be a loss to the devout reader, but it was unavoidable. The most rigid brevity had to be secured. Further, the special object of meditation is to afford scope for the spontaneous action of the mind and the personal application of each detail. If such reflections be not the product of individual effort according to individual needs, but be supplied ready-made, the exercise becomes a sermon or a spiritual reading, and ceases to be mental

prayer or meditation proper. Under a method which supplies a just sufficient guidance to the thoughts, without the embarrassment of too great wealth of suggestion, it is enough to indicate briefly one possible line of application, and leave the rest to individual initiative.

Although the meditations are so much abbreviated, it may possibly be found that they contain too much material for an ordinary meditation. In that case, two points might be taken on one day, and a repetition of the same with the addition of the third point on the next.

A method of meditation has been drawn out in full and prefixed to each volume for convenience of reference. This method, except for some very slight modifications, is identical with the Sulpician.

A simpler method may be suggested for the use of those who may find the Sulpician system too elaborate, or who, for any reason, may have a difficulty in fixing their minds on the subject, or who may be liable to interruptions during the meditation. First, read one point carefully. Select some idea which suggests a brief ejaculation regarding God, such as praise, adoration, wonder. Repeat this ejaculation slowly over and over, varying it only when the mind spontaneously thinks of some modification of it, or of some addition that may be made to it. When this ejaculation, or the series, is exhausted, take another that regards yourself, such as self-reproach, or encouragement, or petition. Repeat this many times

as before. If time allows, go on to the second and third points. Conclude with a vocal prayer—*Pater*, *Ave*, *Anima Christi*, or any other that seems appropriate.

METHOD OF MEDITATION.

Remote Preparation.

1. Read the meditation over-night
2. Review it at intervals till next morning.
3. Affections of love and joy up to the meditation.

Introduction.

1. Place yourself in the presence of God.
2. Act of humility : acknowledge your unworthiness.
3. Confess your incapacity . ask for aid.

THE MEDITATION.

I. Adoration.

1. Contemplate the subject in God the Father, or in Jesus Christ, with reference to His (1) Dispositions, (2) words, (3) actions.
2. Offer Him, with respect to the subject, (1) Adoration, (2) Admiration, (3) Praise, (4) Love, (5) Joy, (6) Gratitude.

II. Reflex action on yourself.

Transfer to yourself what you have contemplated in God, considering :—

1. What example, or warning, or knowledge, is to be gathered with a view to your own case ?
2. What are your past negligences, present deficiencies, future needs ?
3. What grace do you require from God ?

III. Practice.

1. Petition.
   (1) Simple petition.
   (2) With obsecration (through the merits of Christ, the Blessed Virgin, etc.).
   (3) With thanksgiving.
   (4) With intercession for others.

N.B.—Your petitions must be (1) Humble; (2) Confident; (3) Persevering.

2. Resolutions.
   (1) Let them be practical.
   (2) For immediate use.
   (3) Adapted to your special case.
   (4) Efficacious.

3. Colloquies.
   With God the Father, Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin, your Guardian Angel, etc.

Conclusion.

1. Thanksgiving.
   (1) For admission to God's presence.
   (2) For ability to pray.
   (3) For lights received.
2. Contrition.
   For faults committed, with a brief examination of the meditation.
3. Oblation.
   Offer the meditation to God by the hands of the Blessed Virgin for the supplying of all defects.
4. Spiritual Bouquet.
   Sum up the meditation in a maxim or ejaculation to be recalled during the day.

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MEDITATIONS ON CHRISTIAN DOGMA.

TREATISE I.

GOD.

1.—THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

I. "All men are vain in whom there is not the knowledge of God" (Wisd. xiii. 1). Ignorance and want of reflection about divine things are two fruitful sources of anxiety, doubt, discontent, and sin in the world. "With desolation is all the land made desolate, because there is none that considereth in his heart" (Jer. xii. 11). We need, not only to have learnt once for all, but to revolve continually in our minds, the great truths which God has revealed. The will, which is the embodiment of human energy, is a blind faculty, and, if left to itself, stumbles in the darkness; the intelligence is the torch that guides its footsteps. The intelligence must be formed by the knowledge of God and meditation on Him in order to be adequate to its great task; otherwise the will cannot burn with affection towards God and crave for moral goodness. We need this light always burning before us to illumine our path and help us to pick our steps. How great is the blindness and how lamentable the miscalculations and failures of those who have not this light! Consider how much you need the science of God, and how deficient you are in it. Resolve to apply yourself to it. Ask God to infuse it into your soul.

II. The remedy for ignorance and inconsideration is to be found in knowledge and meditation on Devotional Theology. As a science it will perfect the understanding, as devotion, the will. By this we shall learn to know of God and His attributes, the deep mysteries of the Trinity, the holy spirits who will be our companions for eternity, the significance of creation. We shall understand more about Our Lord Jesus Christ in His double nature as God and man, and the lessons of His life; His Blessed Mother also, in whom we can study mere human nature brought to its highest expression by the plenitude of grace and close

association with the three Divine Persons. We shall be able to cast light upon the great problems that have perpetually exercised men's minds—the origin of evil, the permission of sin and suffering, the object of our existence, the law of our perfection and happiness, the secrets of the future life, the designs of God's Providence. We shall study God's commands, the nature of virtue, the graces by which we are aided; and we shall receive comfort, strength, illumination, certainty, such as earthly science cannot give us. This divine study will lead us through knowledge to the love of God and the practical ordering of our lives. Beseech God to give you Wisdom that sitteth by His throne, to send her from the throne of His Majesty, to be with you, and labour with you, and preserve you by her power (Wisd. ix.).

III. To attain to this divine science, the prime necessity, beyond all talent and cultivation, is purity of soul. Only the pure of heart can see God. "Wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins" (Wisd. i. 4). The intellect must be purified by faith, which eliminates perturbing errors and dispels the mists that cloud the spiritual vision. The will is purified by innocence of life and adhesion to God in love. These faculties, like all others, are susceptible of cultivation, and of being perfected to an extent incredible to those who have not personal experience of it; they become sensitive to the finer vibrations of divine light and divine warmth which are lost upon the coarser sensibilities of the worldly, the selfish, the proud. Deplore the many impurities of your mind and affections. Ask God to send His angel with a burning coal from the altar to touch your heart and lips, and to purify you, if needs be, by fire, so that you may be capable of dwelling on His mysteries, singing His praises and loving Him. "To know Thee is perfect justice: and to know Thy justice and Thy power is the root of immortality" (Wisd. xv. 3).

2.—THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

I. God exists. This is the first truth of all truths; it is eternally true, before all ages, without beginning; it is a necessary truth, for the opposite is inconceivable; it is the most important of all truths, for all things affirm it, and all depend upon it; and it is for ever unchangeable. This truth is the foundation of that most universal, most constant of all phenomena, Religion. Around this all civilizations have grown up; because this alone furnishes a rational ground for virtue, for that suppression of natural savagery and selfishness which is necessary for social life. The recognition of this truth makes all the difference between high and noble lives, and noxious, degraded, animal lives. To all those who aspire to higher things, even though conscious of sin and depressed by their weakness, the existence of God is a source of strength and hope and joy. It gives them an ideal that is higher than mere matter, a hope that raises them above this world and enables them to bear its disappointments, courage to repent, and assurance of pardon. How miserable the lot of those who have deprived themselves of all this, who possess nothing and believe in nothing but themselves and possessions and pleasures! Thank God for having revealed so clearly this most glorious truth. Keep it always before your eyes and in your right hand, by continual remembrance of God, and by doing all your works for His glory.

II. The existence of God is not only revealed, it is also a truth of the natural order, enforced on our recognition by the material world around us. "For by the greatness of the beauty and of the creature, the Creator of them may be seen so as to be known thereby" (Wisd. xiii. 5). The world proclaims the existence of a first principle, greater than itself, from which all things proceeded. The immensity, the splendour, the order of the universe, the perfection of

the most insignificant but countless details, make known a great Being of infinite power and wisdom and goodness. So distinct is this teaching that the lowest barbarians, unable for the rest to rise above material things, yet hold firmly, with greater or less distinctness, this transcendent truth. Some individuals, no doubt, have rejected this doctrine ; but we need not be surprised that humanity, like every other class of beings, has its aborted or atavic forms. "The light of Thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us; Thou hast given gladness in my heart" (Ps. iv. 7). Look with reverence on this world which God has made. It is a revelation of God to us, and is not made superfluous by the higher and supernatural revelation; each illustrates the other. Search for God in each and you will find Him.

III. How shall we conceive to ourselves this supreme existence? Pagans have thought of God under human, unworthy, even degraded attributes. There are whole classes of Christians who transform the Deity into their own likeness, instead of modelling themselves upon Him. They attribute to God their own points of view; or they judge of His works as if they knew His motives, and as if His works were those of man. Watch for this tendency in yourself and suppress it. St. John represents the Divinity as universal light and life filling all things, and dazzling the comprehension of the world. We may think of Him as one supreme, boundless, formless, changeless spirit, the tranquil source of all the exuberant life and energy of the universe; as manifested to us in the mysterious Trinity, and visibly in that Divine Person who became Jesus Christ. St. Augustine tells us that if we would approach to the idea of God we must think of Him as Supreme Love. See into what a sublime region we rise at once when we turn to God! How far above the sordid cares and pleasures of the world! Live always in this region. Let this great truth, like the sun, shine ever before your eyes and illumine your life.

3.—THE DIVINE PERFECTIONS.

I. The attributes or perfections of God are those qualities which proceed from His Essence and manifest it to us. God possesses every actual perfection of creatures, and every conceivable perfection, in an infinite degree. As we cannot fully conceive them, we must try to rise to some inadequate appreciation of them by considering such manifestations of them as occur in the visible creation. There we have the incalculable vastness of the celestial world, the long epochs of cosmic time, the irresistible forces of nature, the varieties of beauty and marvellous works of skill and power, from solar systems down to the infusoria in a drop of water, the vast achievements and vaster cravings of human minds. All this has proceeded from God in the first instance. He surpasses it all. It is the merest dim reflection of the unimaginable splendour of God. How magnificent will be the full revelation of God given to us in glory! He contains all that we can desire. He alone can satisfy the immense cravings of human nature. Seek Him then above all things, and let nothing come between your soul and God to turn you from this wonderful treasure reserved for you. "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God!" (Rom. xi. 33).

II. All that is contained in the Divine Essence is really one and indivisible; there is no real multiplicity of qualities. God's sanctity is His wrath, His mercy is His justice, His power and His love are one and the same. But in order to accommodate realities to our comprehension and to the limitations of our speech, we make a division of the divine attributes according to the different effects produced on us. The perfections of God are, then, from this point of view, numerous, and varied; we know of many, but there are many more which are not manifested in this limited sphere to our limited comprehension. Consider some classes of

them. The negative attributes express indirectly God's infinite perfection by excluding from Him all conceivable limitations and imperfections; thus we say that God is uncreated, unchangeable, incomprehensible. The positive attributes, such as wisdom, power, goodness, are those which directly attribute perfections to God. Some perfections are immanent in God, such as His sanctity; while others express a relation of action towards us, as His providence, predestination, mercy. Some are incommunicable, according to that; "I will not give My glory to another" (Isa. xlii. 8); such are His eternity and immensity. Others again are communicated in a measure to us, like intelligence, prudence, the supernatural life, the beatific vision. Every good or great quality in creatures extorts your love or admiration; how much then does God deserve from you on account of His great attributes! You cannot know how great is your debt. Render Him all that you can.

III. We have no experience of good qualities unalloyed. We speak, accordingly, of having the "defects of our qualities." Our highest virtues, though infused by God, are limited and are accompanied by many faults. Our faith, our justice, our love, are all seriously imperfect. All things in us err by excess or deficiency. Reason is obscured, the will tends to love evil, power is ineffectual; greatness is dangerous to us, beauty is transient, desire is insatiable, gratification ends in disgust, our best virtues are spoiled by our conceit. With God how different! All is perfect. Action is without effort, repose without inactivity, justice without harshness, mercy without weakness, joy without drawbacks, power equal to His desires. There is no weariness, no failure, no disappointment. Rejoice that God, in whom you trust, is so perfect. Recognize your own imperfection and nothingness. Take no credit to yourself for anything; all that is good in you is from Him; all that is really your own is your weakness, your folly, your shame. And this is the whole of man without God.

4.—THE SIMPLICITY OF GOD.

I. Simplicity means the exclusion of component parts, and is an attribute, although not a property of spirit. God is supremely spiritual, and is therefore supremely simple. He differs from matter, which has a necessary relation to quantity and therefore to parts. He differs from ourselves, in whom are found not only the composition of quantitative parts, but also the composition of body and soul, of faculties and qualities various in kind. He differs from the angels, in whom is found the composition of essence and existence, of substance and properties. So we must not consider the character of God as being composed of different qualities antagonistic to and checking one another. We must not think of His mercy as contending with His justice and frustrating it; nor of His promises and threats as representing different frames of mind. We must distinguish between what is figurative, or spoken according to human apprehension, and the inconceivable, inexpressible divine reality. Your soul, as a spiritual substance, is immensely superior to your material body. Endeavour to become more spiritual, and so more like to God, alienating yourself, as far as you can, from flesh and blood by means of prayer and mortification.

II. From this perfect simplicity of God's essence which lies at the root of His immutability, it follows that He can receive no extrinsic addition of anything to His substance; nor is He, as we are, brought into new relationships to beings by any change of environment. So the course of events does not pass through the stages of past, present and future with regard to God. He is always acting, yet in His eternity there is no beginning of action, no end of action, no change of activity. We express the truth in an approximate way when we say that all things and all events are always present at once to God in His eternity, which is simultaneous totality of life without any succession. So

also God is everywhere, but He is not under the conditions of space; He is great, and yet is not extended or measurable; He creates all things, and is not the richer for them; He changes all things, and yet towards them He changes not. The simple essence of God is all things; it is law, it is love, it is justice, it is eternity. Hence you cannot divide God so as to possess Him partially. You possess Him entirely or not at all. One mortal sin excludes God entirely from the soul. You cannot disobey one of His laws and have the merit of obeying all the others. He cannot be present with you in one respect and absent in another. Hence the impossibility of that which so many attempt, *viz.*, serving God simultaneously with mammon, or the world, or self.

III. Not only is God simple in the sense described; He is so in the further sense which excludes duplicity in thought, word or deed. All in Him is simple, straightforward, undisguised truth. In His teachings and in His dealings with us there is no admixture of Yea and Nay, of "I will" and "I won't," but all is categorical and positive, and no word of His can ever pass away. What God promises He will perform; His threats are literally true, and are not spoken for effect. Hypocrisy, double-dealing, paltering with the truth are abominations in His eyes. He demands from us, in our relations with Him, with ourselves, and with our neighbour, perfect candour, simplicity, consistency. "Wo to them that are of a double heart, and to wicked lips, and to the hands that do evil, and to the sinner that goeth on the earth two ways. Wo to them that are faint-hearted, who believe not God: . . . and have forsaken the right ways, and gone aside into crooked ways" (Eccli. ii. 14-16). There are many who would not wilfully deceive a neighbour with false words, yet do not shrink from deceiving themselves with vain excuses for not following the lead of light and grace; but they do not deceive God, and He will not be mocked.

5.—THE GOODNESS OF GOD.

I. God is good in Himself with natural goodness; that is to say, He possesses all the natural qualities which belong to His nature. God, being truly God, is what God ought to be, and possesses all that God ought to possess; being infinitely perfect, He possesses this entirely and not partially; being necessary, He possesses His perfections absolutely, and cannot suffer any loss or diminution of them. God possesses every conceivable goodness in an infinite degree. He is all that is most beautiful, holy, pure, delightful, useful, wonderful, lovable. Therefore when Moses asked to see His face, God answered, "I will show thee all good" (Ex. xxxiii. 19). God holds this not from another, or by participation, but of Himself and by virtue of His own nature. No other being is good in this supereminent way; whence it is written, "None is good but God alone" (Luke xviii. 19). How admirable, then, and desirable is God, and deserving of our highest love, even apart from all that He has done for us and the love that He has shown us. Render Him love and service purely for His own sake. This is the highest kind of love and homage. Pray Him, with Moses, to show you His face, and with it supreme and total goodness, not only in the next world, but here too in your meditations.

II. Goodness is, of its nature, "diffusive of itself" (St. Denis). God is good with respect to His creatures, as being the source from which all goodness of every kind is originated and poured forth. He may be compared to the sun, which is ever emitting heat and light and vital force in every direction, on all the worlds which come within its range. "The eyes of all hope in Thee, O Lord, and Thou givest them meat in due season. Thou openest Thy hand and fillest every creature with blessing" (Ps. cxliv. 15, 16).

This diffusion of good is always in full activity, and is never checked for an instant. It falls on all alike, however great their unworthiness or the bad use they make of it. None can escape the continual outpouring of blessings. All this God does, not under constraint, not moved by any desert on our part, not for any advantage or gain to be expected from us, but simply from the very nature of His goodness itself. Therefore "give glory to the Lord because He is good. Let the mercies of the Lord give glory to Him, and His wonderful works towards the children of men" (Ps. cvi. 1, 15). Glorify God by imitation, and by diffusing upon others, without hope of gain or even of gratitude, such blessings temporal and spiritual as may be within your gift.

III. The immense goodness and kindness of God towards man, the chief of the works of His hands, is manifested in a special way by every one of His attributes; by His power which has created us, wisdom which ordains all for our good, love which caresses, providence which foresees and protects, justice which renders to us what is due, mercy which pardons sin, eternity which assures us endless happiness, beauty which ravishes our souls. God is good to us variously as father, as friend, as brother, as spouse, as master, as benefactor, as our "reward exceeding great." He is Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, Advocate, Sacrifice, End, Beatitude. Further He is our supreme good as being the author of all the good that is in us; He has given us our natural powers, our virtues, our moral perfection, our efficacy for good, all our successes, and all enjoyments. "The Lord is good to them that hope in Him, to the soul that seeketh Him" (Lam. iii. 25). Seek God alone, and all these good things will be yours. God gives Himself entirely to you; take care to give yourself entirely to Him. Dedicate your body, your thoughts, your action, your life to Him. Strive to be like God, to be good in every quality, in the practice of every virtue, in your relations to every creature that God has made.

6.—THE INFINITY OF GOD.

I. God is infinite in the number of His perfections. It is true that, by virtue of the divine simplicity, the attributes of God are all one and indistinguishable; yet we perceive Him, not as He is, but as our limitations permit. No concept of ours can represent adequately that which is at one and the same time every perfection. We must then view God, now as this perfection, now as that, though all the time we are conscious that all perfections are identified in Him; and that He not only has them all, but further *is* them all, in the indivisible simplicity of His essence. God is far more than the sum of all the perfections we can conceive. We can imagine only the perfections which we find in creatures; but God could go on creating for ever more and more perfect beings, without exhausting the revelation of His own perfections. The prophet babbled helplessly, unable to convey a fraction of the mysteries made known to him. "A—a—a—Lord God! Behold I cannot speak: for I am a child" (Jer. i. 6). St. Paul also saw secret things which cannot be uttered in human speech (2 Cor. xii. 4). How many things you have seen and enjoyed! Yet they are nothing to the wonders of this earth; and they in their turn are nothing to the wonders of the wider universe; and they again are nothing to the marvels of the angelic world; and the whole sum of all is but the flash of a single ray proceeding from the intense brilliancy of the Divinity. "There are many things hidden from us that are greater than these; for we have seen but a few of His works" (Eccli. xliii. 36). Adore the Infinity of God.

II. Furthermore, each one of the innumerable perfections of God is infinite in its range and its intensity. Each one is supreme; it cannot be increased by any addition; neither is it subject to the limitations which beset all things

within our experience; nor can any perfection fall short or fail. Thus, strictly speaking, the patience of God can never fail, nor does His mercy come to an end. When we use such expressions, it is to indicate a permanent change which man by his obstinacy and rejection of God works in himself. God cannot be limited by time, for He is eternal; nor by space, for He is immense; He is not limited by the measure of our intelligence (as many would seem to think when they pass judgment on His decrees), for He is incomprehensible; still less is God expressed adequately by the terms we use to describe Him, for He is ineffable. Neither can our hearts fathom the delights of His love. Thus every perfection of God surpasses all understanding. "We shall say much and yet shall want words; but the sum of our words is, He is all" (Eccli. xliii. 29). How miserable are you before these awful infinities! Humble yourself in silence before this greatness, which your words cannot describe and your mind cannot imagine.

III. God is infinite in magnificence and grandeur. "The Lord is terrible and exceeding great, and His power is admirable" (Eccli. xliii. 31). How can we possibly form any idea to ourselves of this? We can only heap up words indefinite, that convey only the idea that we have no adequate idea of God. We can only picture to ourselves the trivial scenes of grandeur that we know on earth, the angry sea, a thunder-storm in the tropics, a great battle, the triumphant reception of a conqueror, an Oriental pageant, the ancient glories of Egyptian architecture, the inaccessible heights of a wilderness of snow-clad mountains. These absorb all our faculties and fill us with awe and speechless admiration. They are but little after all, and yet we cannot rise beyond them in our present life. What adoration and awe are due to God! How wonderful is His presence! We are actually in that presence when we kneel before the silent tabernacle! Let not the lowly surroundings diminish your awe of the Majesty that dwells there

7.—THE IMMENSITY OF GOD.

I. Immensity is an aspect of God's Infinity; it is the boundless diffusion of the Divine Essence; and in virtue of this, God is ubiquitous or actually present in all created space. Consequently God does not move from place to place. To do so would be to change, which is contrary to His immutability; and it would be acquiring something, certain relations for instance, not already possessed. God is not comprised within the dimensions of space, but He is at once in the whole of creation. In those great expanses beyond our solar system which surpass the capacity of arithmetic to describe, and which the swift rays of light take thousands of centuries to traverse, God is present throughout. He is above all things, not as being locally elevated, but as presiding over all: He is under all things, not as being abased, but as sustaining all: He is within all, not as being enclosed, but as filling them: He is outside all things, not as being excluded, but as enveloping them. Most literally then "in Him we live and move and be" (Acts xvii. 28). The whole of visible creation up to the remotest nebula is overwhelmed and lost in His immensity, like a microscopic animalcule in the depths of the ocean. Remember always this all-absorbing presence of the infinite God, and be ever full of respect for Him in all your words and thoughts and actions. What an outrage it is to sin against Him when actually living by His support and in Him!

II. God may be considered as universally present in three different ways. 1. He is present substantially, by His Divine Essence actually being here and everywhere. 2. He is present everywhere, in that He sees and knows all things; and nothing escapes His watchfulness, even to the most secret thoughts of our souls. 3 He is present

as ruling and guiding all things irresistibly, and operating in them by His power. Further, God is specially present with His elect. 1. The Apostle says: "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. iii. 16). 2. There is a special watchful providence over the just, and predestination of them to grace and glory. 3. There is a special supernatural operation of God in the soul, including justifying grace, and the infusion of virtues, and help in all natural and spiritual duties. How wonderful it is that you should thus possess the kingdom of God within you! This presence of God is your greatest treasure; it gives you strength for every emergency, companionship in loneliness, cheerfulness as against depression, indomitable faith and confidence; it is your happiness and your glory. Value it as such.

III. Although God is actually present in every place and is a witness of every event, yet He contracts no defilement from scenes of sin, He is not hurt by any outrage, He is not dishonoured by any blasphemy on earth or in hell. It is with Him as with the bright, pure rays of sunlight; they shine upon every kind of foulness, but never become unclean or contaminated. God is present to all our sins, yet "He inhabiteth light inaccessible" (1 Tim. vi. 16) at the same moment. He is with us by His immensity and is far above us by His infinity. Nothing can pain Him. Nothing can touch His sanctity, His beauty, His perfect felicity. It is only God who can know of evil and not suffer the penalty of knowledge. We cannot pass through it or live amongst it without imminent peril, if not actual corruption. Keep far away from evil; else, it is tempting God to ask Him to preserve you from it. You must encounter evil, but you need not therefore fall. If God be with you, you can do your duty in the world and still keep yourself unspotted from it. "I set the Lord always in my sight: for He is at my right hand, that I be not moved" (Ps. xv. 8).

8.—THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD

I. "With God there is no change or shadow of alteration" (James i. 17). This attribute of unchangeableness is a great perfection in God. We are always impressed by the sight of stability, firmness, permanence of strength and fitness, whether we see them in a grand building, in a political constitution, in a landscape, or in the character of a noble man. All this exists in a supreme degree in God. Change of any kind is impossible to Him, whether it be in His substance or in His relation to creatures; for change denotes the improving of the position or making it worse, gaining something or losing. As being infinite and possessing in Himself all perfection, it is impossible for God to suffer any addition or any diminution. As eternal, He exists outside of the conditions of succession and time, so that the progress of events is not a change to Him. The whole of the celestial bodies are in a state of most rapid motion, but this is no change relatively to God, who is everywhere by His immensity. As all-wise and all-knowing, God cannot experience anything unexpected; nor can He learn any new thing that would change His determinations or His action towards creatures. How majestic is God, imperturbable, unmoved, unchangeable for all eternity! Prostrate yourself before this grand attribute. Know that God will never change towards you, never desert you, never fail you, never deceive you, nor grow weary of you or forget you. Rest firmly on Him and you will be strengthened in faith, in virtue, in perseverance, by participation to some extent in His immutability.

II. We speak of God changing His dispositions and acting differently at different times towards His creatures. But this is an inaccuracy, necessary in the transference of spiritual ideas into human speech. What change there is is

in ourselves, and in the different results produced by the one law in its incidence on our varying actions. So it is that we speak of the sun as rising, or withdrawing his light, or growing hotter, whereas the changes are really in the conditions of this earth. No alteration then takes place in God as a consequence of our action. As our sins do not injure Him or disturb Him, so, on the other hand, our service and love are not any new happiness to God, or any increase in His essential glory. So far as we are said to advance His glory, it is only His accidental and temporal glory with regard to creatures that is promoted. "What doth it profit God if thou be just; or what dost thou give Him if thou be unspotted?" (Job xxii. 3). Acknowledge humbly that all your justice, which you esteem so highly, is worthless before God; that you have never really done anything for Him, and that you are a most unprofitable servant. He does not want you except for your own good.

III. Consider, on the other hand, how variable and inconstant creatures are. All things are in a state of flux, rising and falling, flourishing and decaying and taking new forms. So the days and seasons and generations pass by. So kingdoms and civilizations and races of men come and go, and the whole surface of the earth is renewed. All ideas, customs, theories, and even sciences, change from day to day. "They shall perish but Thou shalt continue; and they shall all grow old as a garment, and as a vesture Thou shalt change them, and they shall be changed. But Thou art always the self-same and Thy years shall not fail" (Heb. i. 11, 12). There is no fixedness, no certainty, no permanence, except in God and in that religion which is never to fail. Human religions change like the minds of men, and all at last suffer the final change of dissolution. The Church of God alone outlives all institutions and never grows antiquated. Thank God that your faith is founded on an immutable rock; but pray that your life may ever change—for the better.

9.—THE ETERNITY OF GOD.

1. The Eternity of God is His infinite tenure of life. The life of God is nothing else but God; so it is incomprehensible, and can no more be represented in human words than the likeness of God can be painted in oils. For we can only conceive of existence as in time, and as having succession and duration, and we necessarily speak of all existence in corresponding language. Now, time and eternity are incommensurable terms. They are of analogous significance, as being the creature's tenure of life and God's; but they are the opposites of one another at every point. Eternity is first the *simultaneous* possession of life, whereas time is of successive instants. Eternity is neither past, present nor future. So St. Denis says that God never "was," for there is no past in His life; He never "will be," for there is no unrealized future before Him; and it is not to be said, in our sense, that He "is," for our present is a transient moment, gone before we enjoy its possession. However, on account of our imperfect grasp of the idea of Eternity, we are obliged to speak of God as if He had a successive life, with an indefinite past at one side—"He always was;" an indefinite future at the other—"He always will be;" and a present like ours intermediate between the two—"He is." In picturing Eternity to our minds we try to multiply durations till imagination ceases to grasp them; we think of God's existence as extending backwards and backwards out of sight and forward into the future, beyond the enormous periods of created existence. And yet all this is not the first factor of a true idea of eternity. It is even misleading, for it is an attempt to picture eternity by multiplying an element which is contradictory to eternity. Mortify your curiosity. "Seek not the things that are too high for thee, and search not into things above thy ability: . . . for it is not necessary for thee to see with thy eyes the things that are hid" (Eccli. iii. 22-23).

II. Eternity is the possession of a life *without any limits*. This is involved in the first quality of simultaneousness. As there is no such thing as past or future in God's wonderful eternity, so it is impossible and unthinkable that such an existence should ever have begun or should ever finish. Beginning and ending belong to time, and to creatures, which exist in time. We cannot reckon back the enormous periods of created existence nor calculate its duration. But we are certain that everything we see was once non-existent; and that each individual creature, whether matter or force, a planet or its movement, is now gradually dissipating its energies and will one day sink into inactivity and death. Outside and beyond all this there is the all-pervading, immutable, supreme Existence. "The heavens are the works of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou remainest. . . . Thou art always the self-same and Thy years shall not fail" (Ps. ci. 26-28). Therefore, "to the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Tim. i. 17).

III. God's tenure of life, or His Eternity, is also said to be *complete* or perfect; it is free from all those deficiencies which belong to life considered as in time. Human life is imperfect because, being successive, there is always something that has yet to be attained or something that has been lost. While each stage of life has its duties and its pleasures, each has its disadvantages. We do not possess our life absolutely, but in dependence on another, and on equal terms with millions of others. We are immortal indeed, we are capable of going through an interminable series of successive durations, but we shall never be eternal in the same sense as God. Even the life of glory which we shall derive from Him will not be absolute, independent, complete and perfect in the same sense as His. Still, we shall be raised one day to some sort of participation in that wonderful life, whose glory and beauty and happiness are beyond our present comprehension. Give thanks to God, and desire that happy day.

10.—THE UNITY OF GOD.

I. The next great truth after the existence of God is His Unity. "Know that the Lord He is God, and there is no other besides Him" (Deut. iv. 35). This is a wonderful and a necessary perfection. There is a striking grandeur in the idea of a One, sole, supreme, unequalled Being. The Gentile multiplication of gods was ignoble and debased; it was destructive of the very idea of the supreme infinite God as revealed by Moses and Our Divine Lord. Sovereignty, omnipotence, infinity, perfection, independence are meaningless terms as soon as we attempt to conceive them as divided amongst a number of equal beings. Supremacy is necessarily vested in one or it does not exist. The multiplication of beings is an acknowledgment that no one of them is absolutely perfect: it is a vain attempt to make up the perfection which does not exist in any one of them. So, too, the authoritative manifestation of God in religion must be one and sole. The idea of a multiplicity of religions, all equally good, is a survival of that tendency to deterioration which expressed itself of old in polytheism. If religion be the divine system for the communication of truth and grace, it does not need to be multiplied, like the cells of an electric battery, in proportion to the increase of the circuit. Religion is a representation of God, and is the exercise of His divine action. A number of them, if they are uniform, are at variance with the supreme unity of God; if they are contradictory, they cannot be the manifestation of Him who is harmony and peace. Thank God for calling you to a Church whose unity proclaims its divine origin and its all-sufficiency.

II. Reason, proceeding on the data which the visible world supplies, sufficiently indicates the Unity of God. Science shows us a surpassing unity underlying all things,

and carries us back towards one great original principle of life, motion and law. Harmony and strength are marks of all the works of God; and the source of them is unity and not division. Divided power is weakness, divided authority is no authority. In the spiritual and religious sphere, even more than in nature, we should expect to find the impress of God's Unity. If there is to be among men unity of mind and heart, of doctrine, worship and morals, there must be unity of spiritual laws and religious organization. Disorder and contradiction do not accord with the Divine Ideal. No kingdom divided against itself shall stand. One Church alone maintains the principle of unity and possesses unity in itself. Endeavour always to promote "the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. iv. 3).

III. In relation to man individually, the unity of God demands unity of service from us. We cannot serve two masters; we must serve God alone "with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, with all our mind." If we render partial service to the world or any creature, to our pride, our interests or our lusts, we are putting a false god in God's place. It is equivalent to dividing our loyalty among a number of gods, or attempting to worship God simultaneously in discordant religions; it is compounding together light and darkness, truth and falsehood. Our hearts are too small to love the one great Being sufficiently: much more insufficient is their service if part of it be withdrawn and bestowed on creatures. In any pursuit we can only secure success by concentrating all our thoughts and energies upon it alone. In this respect, the children of light may well take a lesson from the children of this world. Seek God alone and always. Let one principle guide your life in all its diverse operations. Let nothing turn you from the path of consistency, from whole-hearted loyalty and affection towards God. Do not dissipate your energies on any other object; but let all the various duties of life look to God and be turned to His service.

11.—PURITY, SANCTITY AND BEAUTY OF GOD.

I. The purity of God is a negative term indicating that He is exempt from all admixture of anything inferior to Himself, from all fault, taint, imperfection; as gold is pure when it is free from all dross or alloy of inferior metals. "Thine eyes are too pure to behold evil, and Thou canst not look on iniquity" (Hab. i. 13). God is purity most perfect and inconceivable, in Himself, in creation, and in His decrees concerning us, His sinful creatures. Although in such close relations with material things and with sinners, He contracts no imperfection from them. There is in Him no passion or disturbance, for He is immovable in His perfect tranquillity. He is not hasty or inconsiderate, for He is never taken by surprise. He does not the smallest wrong to any, for He is perfect justice. He is not harsh or vindictive, for He is infinite mercy and love. The defects which produce sin in us have no place in God. There is no malice in Him on account of His infinite goodness; no ignorance on account of His perfect wisdom; no weakness on account of His omnipotent power. How then can men murmur against God as if any iniquity could be in Him, or His decrees, or His actions? He is not like us who are full of impurities even in our holiest actions. Ask for purity of mind and heart and body, that God may dwell in you without a rival.

II. Sanctity is a positive term indicating the possession of all moral perfections. "The Lord is just in all His ways and holy in all His works" (Ps. cxliv. 17). Every virtue that we recognize, whether by its presence or its absence in men, exists in God in a supereminent degree. The Divine Essence is the first source and the full reservoir of all virtues and holiness. We have seen much excellence in saints and other great men; it has seemed wonderful to us and almost unattainable; but it is all only a shadow compared to the reality of holiness in God. God is upright

in all His works, perfectly just without failing in mercy, infinitely merciful without making justice a mockery. He is liberal in His gifts, setting no bounds to them but what we ourselves place. His patience never grows tired under our repeated offences. His prudence foresees all things and orders them for the best. God is not exacting or hard in demanding from us more than we can render to Him; but He is most generous in making broad allowance for our inevitable shortcomings. He is pacific in receiving us back as soon as we accept the overtures of His love. God is most true; His words will never pass away, and He will never forget His promises. Glorify God therefore with His angels, saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God of hosts" (Isa. vi. 3). Imitate His holiness by the practice of all virtues.

III. God also possesses the attribute of beauty in an infinite degree. This is another quality of beings when complete and well ordered, and it is the cause of intense delight. Consider how much there is of beauty in the world. We find it in harmonious sounds, in form and colour, in nature and art, in words and in ideas, in the expressions of the countenance, in the moral character of men. It is a special quality different from goodness, truth, utility. How abundant it is, and how much pleasure it affords! It exists also in God in infinite perfection, and in diverse forms more varied and more intense than we can imagine. The beauty of God will ravish us with delight for all eternity. This same beauty of God exists in your soul when you are in the state of grace; you are then more pleasing in the eyes of God than all the wonderful beauty of the material world. Possessing this in yourself and in God, you can afford to dispense with earthly pleasures, to live a life of mortification, and to look forward to the enjoyment of that "Beauty which is ever ancient and ever new." Cultivate this divine quality in your soul that God may take delight in beholding you.

12.—THE PEACE OF GOD.

I. The peace of God is a most profound tranquillity and repose, like the silence of untrodden mountain summits clothed with eternal snows; or like the lowest depths of the ocean, where the fierce storms that rage on the surface are unfelt, and where the turbulent industry of men can never penetrate. Nothing can equal that peace. Within the Godhead there is its perfect unity without diversity, there is immutability untouched by any changes. The will of God is not disturbed by the need of striving after anything that has to be accomplished or possessed; and nothing happens contrary to its determination. God is not like man, disturbed by the weight of responsibility or the greatness of His operations; nor by any incompetence, or weakness, or failure of His plans; nor by hesitation and doubt as to the issue of events; nor by the loss of the love and esteem which so many of mankind refuse Him; nor even by the exercise of His avenging justice when this becomes necessary. "But Thou, being master of power, dost judge with great tranquillity" (Wisd. xii. 18). In the human soul, as in heaven, God dwells not in an atmosphere of tumult, excitement, passion. Those who are eminently the abode of God are marked always by a peaceful and peace-making spirit, by contentment and joy under all circumstances. May this "peace of God which surpasseth all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. iv. 7).

II. The tranquillity of God is not inaction and stagnation. On the contrary, it is the accompaniment of irresistible power always in activity, and never swerving from its purposes, and never overcome. It is like the silence and quiet of the broad sunshine as it bathes land and sea in its glow. Nothing is more peaceful, yet its activity in a single instant is to be measured by millions of horse-power. It is the

source of almost all the mechanical force and heat and motion on this earth. So, too, it is with God. Although He abides in an eternal Sabbath, yet Our Lord says, "My Father worketh until now, and I work" (John v. 17). When we hereafter enter into the repose of the Lord we shall not pass into a state of inactive enjoyment. Life and action are inseparable; and a fuller life means that our faculties will be freed from their present bondage, our powers enlarged, and consequently our activity. God's whole universe will be open to us. Then will begin our true life of increasing mental activity, and, in some way, of usefulness also in a higher sphere of work.

III. Holy Scripture sometimes speaks of God as angry, or as repenting of what He had done. Such passages are not to be understood literally; they are figures of speech, used to impress on us the evil of sin, and the consequences of withdrawing ourselves from the beneficent operation of the divine law. No ingratitude, insult, or wrong can really ruffle the immutable peace of God. Nothing of earth is able to penetrate into the inner sanctuary of the Divinity and diminish the essential joy and glory of God. We need a like equanimity if we are to be happy amidst the turmoil of this world. It can come only from God abiding in our souls. Forgetfulness of God induces an over-anxiety about earthly things, a feverish activity in the pursuit of them, an intemperate indulgence in pleasure, which rob us of the proper rewards of our activity, and destroy the capacity for enjoyment. Even for its temporal well-being human life requires a large infusion of the peace of God; and activity needs to be tempered by grace in order that it may attain its full efficiency. Act always with vigour and upright intention, but leave the result to God, and be contented with it. Let no wrongs endured, no disappointment, disturb your equanimity. Our Lord has said to His faithful: "My peace I give to you. . . . Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid" (John xiv. 27).

13.—THE INCOMPREHENSIBILITY OF GOD.

I. God is known to us with perfect certitude; at the same time we cannot now, and never shall fully understand Him. The infinite heights and the infinite depths of His nature, and the multitudinous aspects which His perfections present to us cannot be grasped and sounded by any less perfect than Himself. "The things that are of God no one knoweth but the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. ii. 11). God is incomprehensible. Man possesses the light of nature for the investigation of truth. His natural faculties, exercised upon the world around him, discover to him the existence of God and some of His attributes, His greatness, wisdom, goodness, and others. "The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, His eternal power also and divinity" (Rom. i. 20). But our science, while penetrating boldly into the secrets of the universe, is checked at the threshold of God's sanctuary. It is unable to analyse and catalogue the divine mysteries; it requires to be refined and elevated first by supernatural grace. God, to our natural faculties, is like a great fire beyond the horizon. We have evidence of its existence and know something of what it must be by the volumes of smoke; but we do not know of its details, and still less do we profit by its light and heat and varied power. Take care not to trust too much to natural faculties and mental cultivation in the things of God. As towards God natural science is profoundest ignorance.

II. To satisfy our desires for the unattainable, God gives us a second light, that of faith and revelation. This is of the supernatural order. By this we are able to receive and assimilate knowledge about the Trinity, the Incarnation, the future life, the moral law, the Church; knowledge which is most positive and certain, and yet cannot be gained by natural investigations, nor proved by natural tests. One

ray of this light does more for our intelligence, in spiritual matters, than years of study and all the instruments of the laboratory. We may compare this higher light to those marvellous rays which penetrate through solid substance and convey to us a picture of metals or bones enclosed within. Unless we have the secret, no accumulation of ordinary light in its greatest intensity is of any avail. At present even the supernatural light reveals God only as "through a glass in an obscure manner" (1 Cor. xiii. 12). Yet it gives us a knowledge such as worldly wisdom never acquires: a knowledge that is primarily spiritual, but enables us to understand many of the secrets of life, of the practical sciences, of history. Be grateful for the gift of revelation and faith, but do not expect that it will dispel all clouds and explain all difficulties.

III. When we shall have been proved faithful and admitted to the presence of God we shall become capable of a higher manifestation of God by the light of glory. Our eyes will be opened, our intellect perfected, and God will be disclosed to our sight. Then we shall know things, which here below eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart conceived. We shall receive a special influx from God, or a light, which will enable us to apprehend the Beatific Vision. Yet even then the angels and the blessed will find God still unfathomable. For eternity they will go on, progressing in mental illumination and in ever new delights, and yet will never arrive at the end. God will remain for ever beyond all human capacity, however enlarged; for He will always be infinite, and we shall always have a finite receptivity. How miserable then will be the lot of those who have been content with the light of nature, have refused to receive or acknowledge the light of faith, and have thereby excluded themselves from the light of glory! They will remain in the darkness of ignorance for ever. Take care so to profit by faith here as to merit the fulness of illumination hereafter.

14.—THE BEATIFIC VISION OF GOD.

I. There are three factors in the vision of God as in the perception of anything else. The first is the *subject* which sees; *i.e.*, the person possessing the faculty or organ of vision. God is not corporeal but spiritual: so that He is not to be perceived with the bodily eye but with the spiritual faculty or the elevated intelligence of angels and men. Therefore the Lord said to Moses, "Thou canst not see My face; for man shall not see Me and live" (Ex. xxxiii. 20). The intellect is the power of perceiving intellectual objects; and it has an aptitude and a need for exercising itself on intellectual objects, of which the first and most eminent is God. Further the mind easily acquires an incipient knowledge of God; and this, like every other faculty, is capable of indefinite development, and indicates the possibility of a transcendent degree of knowledge. There is also in man an intellectual hunger for the Infinite, and a tendency towards it, *i.e.*, towards God. This is shown by the fact that nothing created, whether in the material or the intellectual sphere, can satisfy man's desires and fulfil his ideal of goodness, knowledge and happiness. The natural knowledge of God as seen in the universe does not satisfy this high faculty of vision, this spiritual eye. We require a fuller vision of God here, and a still fuller vision hereafter, if we are to carry out our destiny and develope all the possibilities that are in us. Cultivate clearness of vision according to the indication of Our Lord: "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. v. 8).

II. The second factor in vision is the *medium*, like the light which conveys the impression of the object to the eye. Something analogous to this is required to enable man to see God; according to the Scripture: "In Thy light we shall see light" (Ps. xxxv. 10). The nature of God altogether

transcends that of man; they are in different spheres; man is absolutely incapable by himself of seeing God as He is. His faculties are such that they are not sensitive to the vibrations of that finer spiritual light which makes God visible. These faculties require to have some quality added to them corresponding to a new sense, so that they may perceive the rays as they come direct from God and not merely as they are reflected from creatures. This supernatural quality is called "the light of glory." This is the "eternal light" which we implore for the souls in purgatory. Even in this life the faithful can say, "the light of Thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us" (Ps. iv. 7). They have a light and a vision, by which they can see, and know, and understand things which for others are wrapped in impenetrable darkness. No happiness is so great as the possession of this. It is a foretaste of the vision which we shall enjoy in heaven

III. The third factor in vision is the *object* present before us. Our faculties, which cry out for an infinite object to satisfy them, and that sense in us which has an aptitude for God, are proofs that God will some day be within their range. In heaven the Divine Essence will be present to us in a better way than it is present to every creature in this world. In what way that indescribable Essence will be manifested to us we cannot now conceive. This only we know that God will not be shown to us as at present, in His creatures, His images, His reflections, or in figure, but in Himself, directly, and without intermediary. So the Apostle tells us: "We see now through a glass in a dark manner, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know even as I am known" (1 Cor. xiii. 12). How wonderful, how novel, how far beyond all expectation will be the heavenly vision when it is suddenly unveiled before us! How little we can anticipate now that revelation of glory and delight, the revelation of divine love for us, and of our capacity for loving God!

15.—THE NAMES OF GOD.

I. God is ineffable. He cannot be described. Considering the name as being the summing up and the picture of a person and his qualities and peculiarities, we may say that God cannot be named. If our intellect cannot grasp His essence, still less can feeble words express it. Even the transcendent ideas that find expression only in those nobler languages which we call the arts, are still too much "of the earth earthly" to suggest to us a fraction of the wonders and delights contained in the Creator's smallest attribute. Even this earth will never be adequately described, although it is but the footprint of the Almighty. Hence it was said, "Why askest thou My name, which is wonderful?" (Jud. xiii. 18). And again, "I am the Lord that appeared . . . by the name of God Almighty; and My name Adonai I did not show them" (Ex. vi. 3). The name of God was not pronounced or even known by the Israelites: it was represented by four letters which we pronounce Jehovah. No word can express God's nature but the uncreated Word of God Himself, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Never presume to measure the perfections of God by the ideas of men. You cannot judge of His ways, His designs, the wisdom of His decrees, the methods by which He carries them out. To attempt this is the same as attributing a human character to God and a human name.

II. But because God is ineffable and indescribable, we must not on that account abstain from naming God according to our abilities, from describing His perfections and glorifying His name. In the same way that God, although incomprehensible, may yet be known to a great extent by us; so the impossibility of a full description of Him does not prevent us from describing Him in a way that will excite much devotion and give glory to His name. "When you exalt Him put forth all your strength and be not weary, for

you can never go far enough" (Eccli. xliii. 34). The fact that we cannot go far enough is the very reason why we should go as far as we can. If we cannot render God the whole of His deserts, we should at least offer Him all that is in our power. Glorify the name of God, then, as much as you can, making His perfections known to others, enlightening their ignorance about Him, leading them to practise worship and prayer, and teaching them to love Him.

III. Consider the multitude of names by which God allows us to address Him. The Jews had seventy-two names for God; and we have many more, according to the different aspects in which we regard Him. Much of our knowledge of God is negative; we know that He is free from our imperfections and limitations; so we call Him the Infinite, the Eternal, the Immortal, the Uncreated. Other names refer to God as the origin of all life and virtue and goodness. Therefore we speak of Him as the Creator, the First Cause, the Supreme Being, the Almighty, the All-just, the All-merciful. Under other aspects we may address God as our life, our perfection, our joy, as perfect truth and perfect beauty. In the old times God was called the Lord of Hosts, the strong, the great, the terrible (2 Esdr. i. 5). Jesus Christ has revealed to us a different class of names. Christians think of God more frequently as their love, their highest good, their supreme desire, their felicity, their sweetness, their Spouse, and chiefly as their Father. Above all we know the name of God made man, Jesus Christ, the only "name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12). Rehearse the different names of God, and praise Him for what is signified by each. Be grateful that He has granted you to know His name and to call upon it.

"No voice can sing, no heart can frame,
Nor can the memory find
A sweeter sound than Thy blest name,
O Saviour of mankind."

16.—THE SCIENCE OF GOD.

I. Science or knowledge is one of the great attributes of intellectual beings. It is the assimilation of truth by the mind, and so is a most noble function. It supplies the materials for our action, it guides us as to the use of them, it causes an intense pleasure, and is transformed into great power. Naturally we have a great avidity for it. A power so noble must also exist in God, and in an infinite degree. His knowledge must be perfect. It is complete, embracing all things; it is intuitive, not gained by study or process of argument; it is not subject to obscurity or error; it is never excessive, or a source of danger as with us. "The Lord is a God of all knowledge" (1 Kings ii. 3). The Psalmist asks, "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? Or He that formed the eye, doth He not consider?" (Ps. xciii. 9). The order of the world, its preservation, its progress, testify to the supreme science possessed by God. He is also the author and fount of our knowledge. He is the truth which is manifested partially in this world, and which we gather up laboriously and appropriate to our purposes. God has placed it in our way and guided us to it, and intends it to be a means of leading us upward to Him. Deep knowledge commands our respect when found in a man: how much more admiration and worship do we not owe to God in regard to this perfection! Rejoice also in the happiness that He derives from it.

II. Consider the extent and abundance of God's knowledge. First it embraces infinity as knowing the Divine Essence with all its perfections and all its internal activity; it sees all God's possibilities of external activity in the way of angels, men, worlds, universes. Next, the knowledge of God embraces all things actually to be created, and all the actions of His goodness, justice and mercy

towards them. This is classed as a different kind of knowledge, because it is the knowledge that creates those beings or produces that action. Further, God knows, as Our Lord shows in the Gospels, what would have happened under any difference of circumstances, and all the series of consequences following from all combinations of events, even to the end of the world. God knows our most secret thoughts even better than we ourselves, for He is not blinded by our self-deception. He holds, too, the awful secret of our destinies; and as all things are present at once to Him, He sees now some of us as rejoicing in heaven and some as blaspheming in hell. This last is the one thing not caused by God's knowledge. Your fate is in your own hands, and God knows how you will dispose it. All other things depend on God's previous knowledge of them as causing them. But if you be lost, God's knowledge depends on your action and is caused by it. Live always as being in the presence of God. Let all your acts be such that you will not be ashamed of God's knowing them.

III. Consider the advantageous consequences of God's knowledge. With regard to Himself, His knowledge of His Divine Nature constitutes His eternal happiness. With regard to us, God's knowledge is the cause of our existence and of all that we possess. He knew us and chose us before the foundation of the world (1 Peter i. 2), and His knowledge guided the operations of His power, His benevolence, His generosity towards us. How happy we are to be ruled by One so eminent in all knowledge, who uses it for our greatest advantage. We are safe in His hands. He will never deal with us unwisely, will never forget us or neglect us, will never be mistaken, or fail to understand those circumstances which make every man's case a peculiar one. Never question the wisdom of God's knowledge. Be contented with all that proceeds from Him, for He knows what is best.

17.—THE IDEAS OF GOD.

I. By the *ideas* of God theologians mean those models, as it were, in the mind of God, according to which creatures were made. There is nothing outside God which He can copy or reproduce in creation; but He made all things as manifestations or expressions of His perfections. Each thing, therefore, is in some sense a likeness of something in God. The divine ideas, then, are the Divine Essence considered as the infinite reality which is shadowed forth imperfectly in finite creatures. St. Paul indicates this when he writes: "The world was framed by the Word of God, that from invisible things visible things might be made" (Heb. xi. 3). Some beings imitate God simply in that they exist; others in that they have life; others as having sense; and others again as being intelligent, spiritual, free, immortal, supernatural. Creatures represent variously God's wisdom, strength, ingenuity, providence, fatherly-love, beauty. Everything proceeding from the hand of God is good; everything should remind us of God, teach us something about Him, and lead us to love Him. Strive to recognize the hand of God in all that happens, and believe that all is good for you though it seem to be evil; even if it be really evil God will bring forth good from it.

II. We may also understand by the *ideas* of God the reflection, as it were, of each thing separately in the divine mind; comparing God's knowledge of things to the images or impressions formed in our senses by outward substances, and then conveyed to our brain. Every creature of God is, in a sense, reflected in God as in a mirror. As God is immutable, and acquires nothing anew but has always possessed it, these ideas or reflections have been in Him from all eternity. Not only did God see in Himself what

we and all things were to be, but He saw all as if actually existing. When we are admitted to the sight of God we shall, in seeing His divine mind and participating in His ideas, see these reflections of all things in Him; and thus, without investigation or study, but by a mere glance, we shall possess our knowledge in God. Your image too has been impressed on the consciousness of God from all eternity, as an object of His Providence and His love. Therefore He says by the prophet: "Behold I have graven thee in My hands" (Isa. xlix. 16): and again, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jer. xxxi. 3). In return keep the reflection of God's image always vivid in your mind.

III. There is one thing that has no counterpart idea in the mind of God, which derives nothing from Him, and reflects nothing from out of the great total of reality and good which exists in Him. That thing is the state of sin. In sin, therefore, there is no particle of good; it is the privation of good and the contradictory of God, as nothingness is the contradiction and the destruction of existence. It is essentially evil of its own nature; it is the supreme evil as being the opposite of supreme good; and it is the only real evil, since everything else is from God. God indeed sees, and knows, and has for ever known our acts of sin; after sin He still bears with the sinner patiently, is mindful of him, loves him, and invites him to penance. But the state of the sinner is an abomination to God, and destructive of God in its tendency, and actually exterminates God from that soul; and this, of course, cannot become an idea, *i.e.* an actuality, in God Himself. Thus the sinner's state and the supernatural state, *i.e.* heaven, *i.e.* God, are absolutely incompatible. Keep sin, therefore, out of your mind and your heart. Remember it only for contrition and atonement. No consequences but evil ones can follow from essential evil, however plausible its appearance.

18.—THE TRUTH OF GOD.

I. The first kind of truth to be considered is metaphysical truth, or truth of essence, or truth of nature. We assert this of a being when we say that it is true to its nature; and we mean thereby that it possesses all the qualities that belong to its nature, and that it is a full and complete member of its class. This kind of truth God possesses eminently, as having all the perfections proper to the Infinite God. He possesses spirituality, immortality, eternity, omnipotence, independence. All that we can conceive of good qualities and perfections He has in an infinite degree. All that His infinite intelligence can conceive in the way of perfection He possesses. He is true to Himself as God. Further, God not only has, but He is this perfect transcendent truth. For all that is in Him is Himself. There is no division in Him of qualities as distinct from His being. The infinity and the goodness of God are God Himself: and so the truth of God is God. You should be like God as possessing all the truth of your being, all the perfection and virtue which God has decreed to be proper to human nature. If you are sensual, worldly, proud, you are not true to the ideal of perfect man as it exists in God and is manifested in Jesus Christ. Adore the truth of God and cultivate it in yourself.

II. A second kind of truth is attributed to God as being the only solid and perfect reality, the only necessary and abiding substance. Compared with His reality, man and all creatures are mere nothingness. "All nations are before Him as if they had no being at all, and all are counted to Him as nothing and vanity" (Isa. xl. 19). Vanity is that which has no substance, which cannot be grasped, does not satisfy, does not sustain, produces no fruit. Such is the

whole of creation. It proceeds in some incomprehensible way out of nothingness, it is supported by the breath of God, without Him it would sink back into nonentity. "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of the grass. The grass is withered and the flower thereof is fallen away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever" (1 Peter i. 24, 25). And again, life "is a vapour which appeareth for a little while, and afterwards shall vanish away" (James iv. 15). Adore God as the sole reality that abides. Do not be so shortsighted as to spend all your energies and set all your hopes on shadows unsubstantial and transient. "How long will you be dull of heart? Why do you love vanity and seek after lies?" (Ps. iv. 3).

III. There is a third kind of truth or rather truthfulness. It is a quality of the intelligence, and consists in ideas being conformable to realities. God sees all truth in Himself, and all creatures as they really are, without any deception. This knowledge is His truth; it is the perfect correspondence of subject with object; and He is Himself this truth. Further, His words to us correspond to the ideas of the divine mind; they convey truth to us far more certainly than any words of men, any evidence of our senses, any conclusions or any prejudged opinions of our minds. These words of God are not merely true, they are the truth; and though heaven and earth pass away, they will never pass away. So perfect is this veracity of God that the Apostle comparing us with Him says, "God is true and every man a liar" (Rom. iii. 4). Worship God as the Supreme Truth. In homage to Him cultivate truth in all its forms. Let no doubts or sophisms turn you from the most absolute reliance on the word of God; be careful not to overlay it with your own false ideas and attribute divine veracity to them. Strive for true views of all things; and confess the truth without timidity or compromise.

19.—THE LIFE OF GOD.

I. Holy Scripture speaks of the life of God as one of His distinctive attributes; it frequently calls Him the Living One or the Living God. He affirms by His life, in Ezechiel: "As I live, saith the Lord:" and the angel in the Apocalypse "lifted up his hand and swore by Him that liveth for ever and ever" (Apoc. x. 17). A living being is one that has in itself a principle of operation or of movement. Life is the source of activity either in regard to oneself or others. God has this. He is not a dead inactive substance, He does not operate or move in accordance with some higher external law; but He has a most full and superabounding vitality, which first energizes within the Divinity, and then diffuses itself and becomes the origin of all other life and activity. The Divine Life is not as the life of the plant or the sentient life of the animal, but it is the highest kind, spiritual, intellectual; and from this intellectual life proceed all material substances and all forces. Even our poor intelligence operates on external matter, and is, in a modified sense, creative; much more is this the case with God. The divine life is the breath of our nostrils (Job. xxvii. 3) in the natural order; and a more special communication of it is our life in the supernatural order. A spontaneous, irresistible drawing towards life is a sign that it is vigorous in you. Take delight in God, long after Him, try to say "My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God" (Ps. lxxxiii. 2).

II. Consider the excellence of this divine life in God. It is spiritual and intellectual. "The cognition of the Divine Essence is the food and drink of the Word" (St. Clem. Alexand.). The divine life is full of purity and sanc-

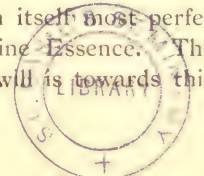
tity and virtue of all kinds. It is most peaceful, happy, tranquil and content. It is perfectly free, independent, and sovereign. It is the first source and the last term of the perfection of all created natural and supernatural life. It is an inconceivably perfect life beyond all powers of description. God communicates Himself to you in divers ways, and with Himself His life. This takes place through Our Lord, through His teaching, His Church, His grace, His Sacraments; and it is accomplished so perfectly that we may become able to say, "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20). Then all the aforesaid noble qualities of the divine life become realized in us. Thank God for these wonders, and for thus elevating you above the natural creation and above your natural capacities.

III. God in Jesus Christ becomes our life (John xiv. 6). We sorely need this life. Compare human life with the divine. "Man born of a woman, living for a short time, is filled with many miseries; who cometh forth like a flower and is destroyed, and fleeth as a shadow, and never continueth in the same state" (Job. xiv. 1, 2). Our life begins in nakedness and feebleness and tears, and in original sin; it continues in labours and sorrows, in fears and disappointments, in perversity, folly and sin; it ends in weariness and failure, in humiliating decay, or in premature catastrophe. It is seldom successful, generally pitiful, and often is considered not worth living. There is only one thing that will elevate it, that will lend it dignity, that will make it endurable and useful; and that thing is the infusion of the supernatural life of God. The universal cry of human nature is, "Unhappy man that I am! who will deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. vii. 24). Your life is worth nothing to yourself or to others unless God be with you. This is the greatest truth of moral and social science and the secret of your happiness. Do not wait to learn it by sad experience, but be wise in time.

20.—THE WILL OF GOD.

I. The will is a necessary accompaniment of intelligence. The intelligence knows and compares different things, or different courses of action; the will is the executive power which gives effect to the judgments. In the intelligence activity commences, by the will it is carried to completion. The Supreme Power is not a blind force like the air or gravitation; such a power would be inferior to us who possess a will, and it could not have given birth to an effect in us so far superior to the cause. The divine power, mercy, justice, generosity, all imply the determination of an infinite will. God possesses this faculty, like all others, in an infinite degree. He has the power of choosing or rejecting, of desiring, of inclining towards His creatures, taking delight in them, and of loving them. The will of God differs from ours in several respects: 1. it does not waver between good and evil, but is irrevocably fixed in its determination towards perfect good; 2. it is not affected or changed by external forces, but it exercises complete domination over them; 3. it is not impotent and fragile, but it is all-powerful and invincible. Nothing is more perfect, more mighty, more beneficent than the Divine Will. God "worketh all things according to the counsel of His will" (Eph. i. 11). As you serve God by your reason and intelligence in receiving the truths of faith, complete the offering by the service of your will, inclining towards Him, obeying His commands, delighting in Him, loving Him.

II. The act of volition by which God wills a thing and takes delight in it is called His good-pleasure. The primary inclination of the divine will must necessarily be towards that object which is in itself most perfect and good; *viz.*, towards His own Divine Essence. The full and infinite determination of His will is towards this, and He loves it



with an infinite delight. Secondarily the will of God goes out towards creation. He sees in His Divine Essence the innumerable forms of life in which His perfections can be manifested; and His good-pleasure determines to exercise His power by producing outside of Himself some of these. The different series of beings are called forth, and energies are implanted in them to guide their development according to their kinds. Some of these beings are intelligent and free. These are the special objects of the divine complacency. God wills them to have liberty to control their acts, and light and strength to keep His law, and at the same time power to choose the contrary with all its consequences. Thank God for that determination of His will which called you into existence, gave you a soul with its powers, grace, knowledge and strength, and the reversion of a heavenly kingdom.

III. The phrase "Will of God" also denotes these external manifestations of God's good-pleasure which are intended to guide our conduct. Such are: 1. the permission of moral evil and its consequence, physical evil; 2. the prohibition of moral evil; 3. the operation of good in us by His grace; 4. the command to do certain good actions; 5. the counsel to do other acts which are not laid upon all men, and which we are at liberty not to do if we so desire. These expressions of God's will always stand, whether men conform themselves to them or not; the obligation to observe them remains, and adequate consequences will follow infallibly on obedience or disobedience. One stage of God's external will may be contravened; but He is not mocked, for even this results in the fulfilment of His interior will. "Be not unwise, but understanding what is the will of God" (Eph. v. 17). As His servants our first care should be to know His will and do it. It is often hard to know it, and the knowledge is given only after much delay and in answer to prayer. "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts ix. 6). Whatever it be, carry it out minutely and fearlessly.

21.—THE DOUBLE WILL IN GOD.

I. The will of God is one simple act without progressive stages or variation. Yet it has different effects according to the difference of the objects it deals with, like the sunlight, which to the healthy organism is a delight, but torture to the feeble and diseased eye. To represent this fact to ourselves we have to reduce it to terms of human ideas and speak of a double will in God. Scripture holds the same language, and tells us of God changing His decrees towards the sinner when he repents, and the just man when he falls away (Jer. xviii. 9, 10). The primordial intention of God in creation was to "have all men to be saved;" and therefore "the one Mediator of God and men . . . gave Himself a redemption for all" (1 Tim. ii. 4-6). This we call the *antecedent will* of God. Man, however, is absolutely free, even to the extent of resisting Omnipotence. God does not break man's will by force, but ratifies his choice and allows him to bear the consequences. To this extent the assent of God's will depends on man's; and therefore we speak of God's *subsequent will*, as if it were formed later than the primordial will for such a man's salvation, and after the prevision of his free action. Thus we reconcile the apparent contradiction that nothing happens without God's will, and yet His will is contradicted; that Almighty power desires a man's salvation, and yet that man is lost. There are mysterious depths in the Divine Will that we cannot fathom. "Thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter" (John xiii. 7). Wait in patience.

II. The efficiency of God's antecedent will amounts to this, that He desires most urgently the salvation of every man, and brings it about efficaciously, except so far as each one's free choice and deliberate obstinacy prevent it. God

bestows the means of salvation on all, not scantily, but with at least as great a prodigality as we see in the material creation. He says of the lost soul, "What is there more that I ought to do to My vineyard that I have not done to it?" (Isa. v. 4). Many labour under peculiar disabilities, but the bounteous ways of Divine Providence are peculiar for each man. For every disadvantage there is compensation, for weakness there is gentle pity, for the effects of heredity or misfortune there is the broadest allowance. God does not command the impossible; He requires from each man only in proportion to what he has received; and, as the Gospels often show, the lot of the least endowed is often better than that of the most favoured. Thank God for His desire for your salvation. Trust in Him and do not wrong His mercy by any suspicion. Do what you can, and your salvation is secure.

III. If any man perish, he perishes in defiance of the antecedent will of God. "I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye from your evil ways; and why will you die, O house of Israel?" (Ezech. xxxiii. 11). If the subsequent will has consented to the soul's loss, it is the doing of that soul alone. "Destruction is from thyself, O Israel" (Osee xiii. 9). A very small amount of knowledge suffices for salvation, and God at some time gives this to all. Temptation in itself is never fatal: we are helped to bear it, and grace is proportioned to our needs. "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able" (1 Cor. x. 13). Prayer places the whole force of God's omnipotence in our hands; it pierces the clouds, and, according to Our Lord's repeated promises, its effect is infallible. Only the most absolute carelessness and shocking perversity are capable of neutralizing God's will to save our souls. Still you must always work out your salvation with fear and trembling. You cannot depend on yourself; there are such enormous possibilities of perversity in you.

22.—CONFORMITY TO GOD'S WILL.

I. The will of God is the law of our life; our will is the motive power in our life; if our will, then, is harmonious with the will of God, our life and action will be perfect, in accordance with their law, and in resemblance to God. To accept fully the will of God is indeed a strict duty, but it is also most meritorious. It is an act of profound submission to God in that we subject to His dominion that faculty which holds dominion in our lives, and so exalt His divine authority. It is a grateful sacrifice to God to offer Him a thing that is so entirely our own; and as this faculty sums up all that we have, the oblation of it is a holocaust, a consecration of all our being to God. If we carry out the spirit of conformity fully, we shall be led thereby to the practice of the highest virtues. There is prudence in taking so infallible and beneficial a rule as our guide. There is justice, because we render to the Supreme Being what is His due. Nothing gives such fortitude in acting and enduring as the consciousness that we are fulfilling the will of God. Temperance or moderation is identical with restraining those appetites that oppose the divine will. We acquire perfect peace and security when we feel that everything is ordained by God, and content ourselves with it accordingly. Conformity to God's will is one of the characteristics of the blessed in heaven; and as to us on earth, Our Lord says, "Whoever shall do the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother" (Matt. xii. 50). Offer your will to God. Desire nothing apart from Him.

II. There are four principal forms of this high virtue. 1. Conformity of obedience, whereby we desire to obey all those commands and prohibitions which are essential to our salvation. 2. Conformity of habit, by which we cultivate in

ourselves the same ideas and dispositions towards different objects that God has. This is what St. Paul commands: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. ii. 5). Consider how Our Lord regarded such things as pleasure, labour, death, riches, prayer, mankind, God. 3. Conformity of aim, by which we strive after the same objects as God does; *viz.*, His glory, the diffusion of knowledge and love of Him, the reign of justice, the salvation of souls. 4. Conformity of object, *i.e.*, desiring everything that God desires without exception, and rejecting everything unreservedly that He disapproves of. This last can only be practised perfectly in heaven. Inquire as to God's will in each respect and see how you are conformed to it. Never resist it in the smallest degree, for "who hath resisted Him and hath had peace?" (Job. ix. 4).

III. This last kind of conformity in its perfect form is not demanded of us on earth; our weakness can hardly rise to that height. Our Lord Himself mercifully accommodated His example to our capacities; for, while resigning Himself perfectly to the divine will, He said, "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me" (Matt. xxvi. 39). We too are allowed to pray for favours and deprecate chastisement, in the hope that God may have so arranged things from the beginning, in prevision of our prayers, as to grant our desires; but we must be prepared to accept a refusal or a delay with contentment and gratitude. It is a great perfection, however, "to ask nothing and refuse nothing" in the temporal order, to cast ourselves unreservedly into the arms of the divine will, indifferent to all that may happen, wishing only that God's purposes be accomplished, and knowing that everything He decrees is arranged for the best. So did the saints generally act in regard of themselves. Desire at least to have this conformity. Trust more in God. Be sure that "to them that love God all things work together unto good, to such as, according to His purpose, are called to be saints" (Rom. viii. 28).

23.—THE LIBERTY OF GOD.

I. Liberty is a great and magnificent prerogative. God possesses it in perfection, in a manner beyond our conception. We delight in it, and are continually extending it and safeguarding it; but how imperfect it is with us! Our liberty consists to a considerable extent in restraints on liberty, so that each may be protected against the inevitable encroachments of others. As our liberties increase so do our laws. The most autocratic monarch is restrained in his freedom by international law, by public opinion, by etiquette and custom, by neighbouring countries and by his subjects. Above all, the freest of mankind are subject to God, bound to accept His revelation and obey His laws; they can indeed disobey, but by so doing they become subject to penal consequences here and hereafter. There are other limitations of our freedom imposed by God, which we are not able to transgress; we are bound down to a narrow corner of the universe, we are limited to a few years of life, we are checked continually by the weakness of our faculties. God is absolutely independent and sovereign, and can dispose of infinite powers. Such liberty united to such power would be terrible in any being not possessed of infinite wisdom and goodness. In God all these faculties are one. We, too, require goodness in proportion to our share of liberty. Otherwise liberty becomes a mere instrument of oppression in the hands of the strong and the few. The machinery of law is a mere makeshift to supply the want of moral goodness as a check on the abuses of individual liberty.

II. God is absolutely free in the determinations of His will towards creatures. This is not the liberty of caprice and continual change, but a free determination, immutable and eternal nevertheless, because founded on perfect knowledge of all things present and future. As towards Himself

the determination of God's will is fully voluntary, but it is a necessity of His perfect nature. It is impossible for God to do otherwise than delight in the perfection and beauty and the operations of His Divine Essence. But God was not necessitated in creating this world. He freely chose to act, and accordingly called into being this universe with all its series of creatures, instead of an indefinite number of others which He might have made. Now that God has created the present universe, its material elements go on necessarily in the path of life and growth appointed for them, and they cannot now be other than they are; but this necessity is created by the fact of God's action, and did not exist anteriorly to compel Him to make things as they are. Pay homage to God's liberty by dedicating yours to His service. Thus only will you find true liberty of action and success in your works.

III. Further, in the execution of His will God is free from all interference and obstruction. There is none to question His liberty or His actions. "Who shall say to Thee, What hast Thou done; or who shall withstand Thy judgments?" (Wisd. xii. 12). No difficulty deters God. The whole universe is no more strain on His power than the creation of a particle of dust. One act of volition is sufficient to call into existence all the substances, all the enormous forces, all the varied life and intricate arrangements of the world. Our liberty is not complete, because we are liable to fall into sin; our best resolutions fail, and we are but broken reeds. "To will good is present with me, but to accomplish that which is good I find not. For the good which I will, I do not; but the evil which I will not, that I do" (Rom. vii. 18, 19). Not so with God. Sin and injustice can find no place in Him, nor can they force Him to compromise with them. Keep yourself free from sin. This is the truest liberty here, and the greatest exercise of human strength and determination. This gives you the true liberty of God.

24.—GOD'S LOVE FOR CREATURES.

I. God does not stand apart from His creation, indifferent to it and neglecting it. "Thou lovest all things that are, and hatest none of the things which Thou hast made" (Wisd. xi. 25). The propension of the divine will is one of complacency and benevolence towards all that is good. The first object of this love is the Supreme Good, the Divine Essence; the second object is created good. All creatures are good, as deriving from God, and as being reflections, and in some sort images of the divine perfections. The love of God for the Godhead is communicated to that which is so closely connected with the Godhead as are its productions, its creatures. On every single creature, then, God dwells with pleasure and love. On every one of them does He bestow His favours; natural favours on those that are of the natural order, and much more abundant supernatural ones on those that are supernatural. "Thou openest Thy hand and fillest every creature with blessing" (Wisd. xi. 25). The love of God for men is far in excess of what He bestows on the lower creation; and among men He lavishes a far more intense love on those who are members of the mystical body of His Son, and who serve Him with all their ability. Your love should be given first of all to the most worthy object, *i.e.* God, and then should extend in due order to all creatures of God for His sake, because they are His and are loved by Him.

II. Consider the qualities of the love of God for you and all His creatures. 1. It is eternal. Your image has always been present to the consciousness of God, and He has always taken delight in it. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee" (Jer. xxxi. 3). 2. It is constant; it remains un-

changed even when we have turned against God by sin. He still goes on bestowing favours and calling us to His grace. 3. It is gratuitous. God has nothing to gain from us in return. We have nothing and can do nothing. There is no attractiveness in us that He should desire us, except what He Himself has imparted to us. 4. It is individual. God loves each one as fully as if that creature were the only object of His infinite love. No one need be jealous lest the love given to others be so much taken from him. Be faithful for ever to the love of God who has first loved you. "Forsake not an old friend, for the new will not be like him" (Eccli. ix. 14). Strive to love God, 1. perpetually, 2. without wavering or weariness, 3. for His own sake and not your own, 4. as the sole object of your love, loving all others in Him.

III. Consider the efficacy of God's love. Created love is for the most part selfish, useless, noxious even: it is changeable, inconstant, and is seldom able to do such good as it desires. The love of God produces every good in its object; it gratifies, enriches, ennobles, glorifies. Human love is drawn forth by some good quality in its object; God's love is the cause of all goodness; it creates and diffuses the goodness which attracts it. If God were to withdraw His love momentarily from us, we should at once lose all excellence, all our virtues, all happiness, hope, existence even. God's love then is the sum of all good to you here, and more especially hereafter. Do not barter it for any transient pleasure or advantage of this world. If you possess it, what does all else matter to you? And you have it, for Our Lord Himself has assured you of it, and has proved it by His deeds. Let this be your delight, your support, your consolation, your compensation under all circumstances. Try to love Him as well as you can, and you need have no fear as to the rest.

25.—GOD'S HATRED OF SIN.

I. Sin is the only thing that God has not originated, the only thing not represented in those archetypal ideas of God which are the source of all positive being, the only thing in which there is no reflection of God or participation of His perfections. The state of sin, therefore, has no positive being; for all that has being has it as deriving from God. Sin is rather the state of privation of all that comes from Supreme Being; it is the contradictory of being, or, in the word of St. Augustine, it is nothingness. Being and nothingness, as mutually exclusive, are said to be, in tendency, destructive of one another. Equally, God and sin are diametrically opposed; they are incompatible one with the other. Hence the expression, "Sin, as far as in it lies, would destroy God." Sin expels God necessarily from the soul; the presence of God in the soul is destructive of sin. We express this in human terms by saying that God hates sin infinitely. God's love and tenderness do not make Him tolerant of sin; on the contrary, they are necessarily antipathetic to that evil which is their opposite. Our *soi disant* tolerance of sin and error is not Christian charity, as we would pretend; it is indifference to God's sanctity and is covert sympathy with evil. Sin is further hateful to God for the destruction it has wrought in God's best-beloved creatures. If you really love God you will hate and avoid the smallest sin as worse than all the material evils of life.

II. Consider the qualities of God's hatred of sin in this life. 1. It is tranquil. It is not really the passion of hatred, and there is no disturbance, fury, vindictiveness in it. To express the intensity of God's opposition to sin vividly we speak of it as having the attributes of intense opposition as we know it in men. 2. It is just and reasonable. There is no precipitation, no harshness, no excess of retribution;

but the sin itself is allowed to be the measure and the automatic cause of its own punishment. 3. It is loving. It is caused by, and is identical with God's love of good. It involves no personal enmity to the sinner. God, though expelled from the sinful soul, loves it for the natural good that He has implanted in it, and for its possibilities of supernatural good; and He uses every means to bring the sinner once more to grace. 4. It disappears as soon as sin is removed from the soul, however late in life this may be, and however enormous and multiplied the offences. Never be discouraged by your sins, and never despair of the most obstinate sinner. There is more tenderness in God's hatred of sin than in the greatest mercifulness of men.

III. As soon as this life is over there is a change in the character of God's hatred of sin; or rather in the relation of the sinner to God. Then indeed "to God the wicked and his wickedness are hateful alike" (Wisd. xiv. 9). The sinner has persevered in his obstinacy, has refused the last offer of reconciliation, and confirmed himself for ever in hostility to God. The time of grace, probation and merit, is at an end. The sinner knows infinite goodness sufficiently to hate it as he hated its finite manifestations on earth; he resists the impulse which all nature has towards God, as he resisted the attraction and calls of God during life. Rejecting God, he rejects all kinds of good; and this is equivalent to incurring universal and infinite evil; for evil is simply the privation of good. Hence the overwhelming torrent of miseries in hell. These are spoken of as the burning torrent of God's indignation; but they are, more really, the effect of sin itself, henceforth not checked by God, and allowed to work its own havoc in the soul. For "God made not death, neither hath He pleasure in the destruction of the living" (Wisd. i. 13). How horrible and unnatural is the state of sin as thus revealed! What madness and folly to rush headlong into it! Present sin is one and the same thing with the future hell.

26.—THE MERCY OF GOD.

I. God's action in doing good to His creatures has different aspects and different names. Considering simply the good done we attribute it to God's goodness; when the good is due to us we thank God's justice; thinking of its abundance and gratuitousness we ascribe it to liberality: and we praise His mercy when He sympathizes with our miseries, and relieves them or saves us from them. God gives great prominence to this perfection. The Psalmist says, "The Lord is gracious and merciful, patient and plenteous in mercy. The Lord is sweet to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works" (Ps. cxliv. 8, 9). And the Apostle: "Mercy exalteth itself above judgment" (James ii. 13). God's mercy, though not more infinite than His other perfections, commends itself more to our appreciation, because of the contrast between our miseries and the state to which He raises us. From our point of view God's mercy seems to be more valuable than His power or His wisdom, and to have a wider range and more wonderful effects than His justice or His sanctity. We may see mercy in all God's works. His creatures are all in a state of misery before Him; and when He calls us from the depths of nothingness, and raises us to a state superior to nature, and holds out Paradise as a place of deliverance from all evils, this is all the work of mercy. Thank God for His mercies, and be merciful in your own sphere.

II. The principal and only real misery is sin, with its consequences. The permission of sin has thus created the opportunity for the exercise of the divine mercy; for its chief manifestation is towards sinners. It has several forms. 1. It is gentleness, in that God does not break forth into anger and crush the sinner with His vengeance. 2. It is

patience. We prolong our iniquities, refuse to repent, or make our repentance a mockery; and God holds back the consequences of our sins until we tire of them and return to Him. 3. It is benignity, for God is always ready to receive us back, and even admit us after all our sins to the highest favour in His kingdom. 4. It is clemency; that is, that even if a sinner persists in his obstinacy to the end, the punishment he incurs is always, and in hell even, less than his deserts. Hence the prophet said: "When Thou art angry Thou wilt remember mercy" (Hab. iii. 2); and St. John in the Apocalypse speaks of the anger and judgment of God as being that of the Lamb. Truly "it is the mercy of the Lord that we are not consumed" (Lam. iii. 22). What immense reason you have for being grateful to God for His repeated and unwearying mercy!

III. If God does so much for obstinate sinners, much more will He do for those who repent. He pours forth His mercy on those who reject and despise it; but as for those who implore it and open their hearts for it, He "will show the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy which He hath prepared unto glory" (Rom. ix. 23). This mercy becomes adoption of the sinner as heir of the kingdom of heaven; special protection, against the temptations of hell and relapse into sin; affability, by which God delights to converse with the children of men (Prov. viii. 31); considerateness, which punishes venial sin with troubles in this life, so as to spare the more grievous pains of purgatory; sweetness, in the interior peace and joy that God gives; munificence, in the abundance of present and future blessings. Do not be downcast on account of your miseries your weakness, your repeated failures. They are the very *raison d'être* of God's mercies. They are rather ground for confidence than for despondency, provided you try to serve God and do not sin in presumption on His mercy. Your claim for mercy and salvation rests rather on your sins than on your justice.

27.—THE JUSTICE OF GOD.

I. There is in God a perfect *distributive justice* towards all His creatures. In virtue of this He awards to every being all that it requires according to its place in the divine scheme; He gives it the strength and the adaptability necessary for the duties He has appointed it to do. To man God assigns body and soul, reason and freedom, senses and faculties, the means of maintaining life, subduing the world, and making continual progress. Further, every one receives the graces of his state, adapted to his special work and special difficulties; and by means of these he can infallibly accomplish the natural and spiritual duties of his life, and at last attain to heaven. If we find ourselves deficient in such necessary grace, it is not because God is inequitable and seeks to reap what He did not sow, but either because we have not prayed and secured that grace, or because we have forced ourselves into a position not intended for us by God, where the requirements are beyond our capabilities. Religion is God's great means of distribution; it will supply everything that our special circumstances demand. Never complain against the ordinances of God. You are not qualified to criticize them. Unless you know exactly what God has reserved for each man in the way of duty and future reward, you cannot judge whether his equipment is sufficient or not. Be persuaded that "God is faithful and without any iniquity, just and right" (Deut. xxxii. 4).

II. A second kind of justice—*avenging justice*—marks God's dealings with unrepentant sinners. Terrible as their punishment is, they receive less than their due. They reap only that which they have sown, which they have brought on themselves with their eyes open and with full delibera-

tion. "He loved cursing, and it shall come unto him; and he would not have blessing, and it shall be far from him" (Ps. cviii. 18). Sinners refuse to place their happiness in God, till at last they have so moulded their tastes and character that they have no longer the capacity for finding pleasure in Him. They introduce a permanent disorder into their being, and this necessarily produces permanent evils. The effect is strictly proportioned to the cause. The degree and the kind of the guilt is the exact measure of the punishment. "By what a man sinneth, by the same also is he tormented" (Wisd. xi. 17). "According to the measure of the sin shall the measure also of the stripes be" (Deut. xxv. 2). The sinner shall fall into the pit that he himself digged. Nothing can be more exactly just than this, and nothing more terrible. Let your love and trust in God's mercy be always mingled with fear of His avenging justice. This is the beginning of wisdom.

III. Towards the just God exhibits *remunerative justice.* It is not that God has any obligations towards us, or owes any debt of justice for our services. We are unprofitable servants, we have given Him nothing that was not already His, our virtues are worthless before Him. But God has given us a claim by His promises, and through Jesus Christ, and so has made Himself our debtor. "Whosoever shall glorify Me, him will I glorify" (1 Kings ii. 30). God will render to us infinitely more than we have done for Him, but still there will be some proportion between our services and our reward. All the blessed will possess Him indeed, but it will be in greater or less measure according to the capacity which each one has created for himself by his goodness when on earth. Never repine at your lot, or be troubled about others receiving apparently less than they have merited. God's accounts are not balanced till the next life. Trust in that infinite justice, which after a short delay will rectify all that is wrong, and give compensation for present inequalities.

28.—THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD.

I. God, having created the world, did not thenceforward leave it to itself. He still oversees and guides all things, according to the Scripture: "The eyes of all hope in Thee, O Lord, and Thou givest them meat in due season" (Ps. cxliv. 15). The world requires for its conservation and development a continuance of the same divine influx which created it. It is no more within the power of matter and force to go on in their due order without God than to create themselves without Him. Left to itself for a single instant the whole fabric of the universe would totter and collapse. So in the human order a building, a garden, an army, a social organization, require constant care, or they will go to ruin. Whether God's sustaining influence is renewed from moment to moment immediately by Him, as source of the natural order, or whether it is contained in created forces which received a primordial impulse that will carry them on through the whole cycle of existence, is indifferent to our argument. These are but statements, differing in their degree of completeness, of the same fundamental truth that Providence rules all things. The Providence of God is manifested in these reflections of itself which exist in creatures; in the case of parents for their children, of animals for their young, of the artist for the productions of his hand or brain. These qualities in creatures are evidence of the existence in a supreme degree in God of a most complete, thoughtful and loving watchfulness over His creation. Never forget that God feels this supreme interest in your temporal and spiritual welfare.

II. One great characteristic of Divine Providence is that it "ordereth all things sweetly" (Wisd. viii. 1). There is in its rule nothing violent, arbitrary, or contrary to the nature of things and their due order. There is no irregular interference, no sudden afterthought, no forcing of all sorts of things into one mould. On the contrary, a marvellous di-

versity and freedom prevail within the limits of perfect harmony. In the natural order God works by natural means in accordance with the laws which He implanted in nature at the first. There are no breaks of continuity in His works, no need to supplement His natural arrangements by the introduction of miraculous effects, except for the supernatural purpose of forwarding our salvation, and in strict accordance with supernatural law. You must be content to take things as they have been arranged by God's Providence, not expecting the feeble to be perfect, the free to be constrained, transient things to be permanent. All things cannot be accommodated to your fancies, but you must accommodate yourself sweetly to all things, bearing the defects of others, and accepting humbly the fact that you have still worse defects.

III. Because of the sweetness in the operations of Providence, therefore it "reacheth from end to end mightily" (Wisd. viii. 1), and never fails to accomplish its purposes. Note that there are two classes of objects proposed by God for every creature. One is its *particular* end or aim; such as for the tree to bear fruit, animals to subserve our utility, man to imitate God and attain to His possession; and this object of Providence often fails of accomplishment. But there is a *general* end or aim, *viz.*, the progress of the universe, the justification of God's action and His law, and the manifestation of His supremacy and glory. This object of divine Providence never fails. The storm which uproots the saplings is for the benefit of the forest. The punishment of malefactors is evidence of respect for law, efficiency of government, security for good citizens. Out of particular evils God draws some general good. The wicked supply by their perversity the opposition which elicits and strengthens virtue. Persecution purifies the Church. Sin becomes the means of manifesting God's mercy and His justice. So all things are compelled to work together unto the good of the elect and the glory of God.

29.—THE PERMISSION OF EVIL.

I. At an earlier time infidels endeavoured to discredit the Providence of God on account of the existence of noxious animals, natural catastrophes, and the thousand struggles for life that are always in progress. Certain beings they considered as too vile or insignificant to merit the attention of Providence; other things, as unmitigated evils. A fuller science has now taught us that everything has its uses, and is for the general weal although hurtful in some particular. We have learnt too that the lowliest creatures exhibit as fully as the noblest the ingenuities of God's wisdom, the marvels of His power, the infinite range of His knowledge and prevision. Many mysteries still remain hidden from us; many difficulties will be a trial of faith till new discoveries shall solve them. Do not presume to criticize the inscrutable ways of God's Providence because of being too ignorant to understand them. One day all things will be made clear to you.

II. A greater difficulty to many is the permission of moral evil, with all its tremendous consequences of physical evil here and the eternal loss of souls hereafter. The solution of this will be completed only at the general judgment, but we may attain to a partial comprehension of it here by the aid of faith and good-will. Man possesses liberty. It is his proudest prerogative. It is not for Providence to do violence to the natural order, to put a free man in moral chains, to exact from him the service of a slave in order to give him a reward that he does not wish for. Man knows the law, he knows the consequences of its violation, he has power to observe it if he will, he deliberately revolts against it and accepts the results. He would be the first to protest against the tyranny if God were to overcome his free will by force. The Providence of God acts on the principle which mankind has of late years

arrived at, that the suppression of liberty is a greater evil than tolerating its abuse. The divine wisdom is able to draw a greater good from evil, and is therefore just and holy in permitting it. On this the great mysteries of God's love are grounded, the Incarnation and Death of Our Lord, and the wonderful economy of redemption in the case of each individual. The goodness of God is shown in the pardon of sin and the rehabilitation of the soul after its fall and corruption. The precious virtue of repentance, the meritorious works of mortification, have been thrown open to the sinner, and the joy of the angels of God has been enhanced by the sight. The just are tried in the furnace and provided with opportunities of practising the noblest virtues. Thank God for all the good that has accrued to you from possessing liberty in all its fulness, and even, indirectly, from your abuse of it.

III. Another difficulty has been felt even by the sacred writers, *viz.*, the afflictions of the just. "What profit is it," they ask, "that we have kept His ordinances, and that we have walked sorrowful before the Lord of Hosts?" (Mal. iii. 14). We must know that God has two grades of Providence, the natural and the supernatural. It is under His supernatural Providence that He chastens those whom He loves. He deprives them of the good things of life in order that they may merit a greater abundance of the good things of grace and glory. All God's friends have suffered except Solomon, and therefore, as St Jerome remarks, his heart became depraved and his salvation is uncertain. In the ordinary course no one enters heaven unless he has passed through the school of affliction. It makes men feel the nothingness of this life, it detaches them from possessions and pleasures, it teaches them patience, resignation, fortitude, trust in God; it shows them that nothing is of any value but the service of God on earth and the possession of Him in heaven. Endeavour to learn these lessons.

30.—PREDESTINATION.

I. Predestination is the eternal decree of God to bestow the glory of Paradise on certain souls who, He foresees, will correspond to the grace they receive and work out their salvation. These are God's elect; He regards them with special favour, and promotes the result by His superabundant grace. "He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world" (Eph. i. 4). "Whom He foreknew He also predestinated . . . and whom He predestinated, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified" (Rom. viii. 29, 30). How that decree is formed no man knoweth. How that result comes about through the interworking of the all-powerful grace of God with our complete liberty even we who are most concerned cannot know. No single soul can say that he is predestinate. "Man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred" (Eccles. ix. 1). Thus much we know, that God is infinitely just, and that His mercy is above all His works. He therefore does not select some arbitrarily for salvation and abandon others; but He has made every man to be saved; He has prepared a crown of glory for every sinner, upon his repentance, and has not made hell for them. Every man has it in his power to attain to heaven; he will attain it if he strives; and if he is lost, it will be entirely of his own free choice, and it will be in no measure due to God. It depends on you to make yourself predestinate. Resolve that you will be so, and God's grace will certainly not be wanting.

II. The factors of God's decree of predestination are these: 1. God loves infinitely Supreme Truth and Goodness as contained in the Divine Essence, and desires that they be known and loved by all His creatures. 2. He loves mankind with an infinite love, desires their happiness, and

does everything that is possible, consistently with their liberty, to secure it to them. 3. The satisfaction and merits of Jesus Christ are communicated to mankind to withdraw them from perdition. 4. Through the promises of God man's efforts accompanied by divine grace become meritorious of eternal life. Thus, although we cannot strictly merit predestination, it is granted nevertheless in consideration of our works. It is the absolutely free gift of God, and yet our personal co-operation is an essential condition of it. So you cannot save your soul by yourself, and God will not save you by Himself. God's operation is like the tree, with root, trunk, branches; your co-operation is the foliage; both are necessary in order for the tree to blossom and bear fruit. What confidence this ought to give you in working for heaven! God has done so much for you; so little remains for you to do; and you can do all things in Him that strengtheneth you.

III. There are three chief classes of the predestinate. 1. Those who are not called upon to contribute any co-operation of their own to the work of God. Such are infants who die after Baptism. As they have incurred sin by the act of another, so the merits of Jesus Christ and the action of the Church are attributed to them by God for their justification. 2. The ordinary predestinate, who through many deficiencies and infidelities, through renewal unto penance and correspondence to grace, advance slowly, and by God's mercy work out their salvation. 3. Those of special favour and distinction, of labour and suffering, who are predestinated for great work and great glory. Of these many have been notable sinners, like David, St. Paul, St. Mary Magdalene, St. Augustine. Thus no class is excluded by outward circumstances from even the highest dignity among the elect. Many of the saints of God have at some time been worse than you. Be faithful to God's calls, seek that which is most perfect, and God will work wonderful things in you.

31.—REPROBATION.

I. Reprobation is the decree of exclusion from heaven passed by God on those who, as He sees, will be obstinate in sin and die impenitent. It is not that it pleases God to condemn the creatures whom He loves; it is not that He exercises a right of excluding creatures from that which they have no claim to. "God made not death, neither hath He pleasure in the destruction of the living" (Wisd. i. 13). God is unable to do wrong, to be a source of evil, to be unjust, harsh, arbitrary. Only Calvinism has dared to assert such a thing. Reprobation is this, that God, who foresees all things, foresees also from eternity the wilful self-destruction of some of His creatures. He foresees their revolt, their turning from Him, and His turning from them which is involved in it. He permits this determination of their free-will; and the prevision and ratification of it is called the decree of God. He cannot do otherwise. He cannot but foresee according to facts, as we cannot see differently from the facts that occur before our eyes. God's foresight no more necessitates the event than does our remembrance of a past event. Our remembrance is unalterable, but it is not that which makes the past event unalterable. This terrible secret God knows about you. He sees you at this moment as you will be a hundred years hence. Pray that it be a prevision of eternal life and not of death. "My lots are in Thy hands" (Ps. xxx. 16).

II. The decree of reprobation is not passed in consequence of our fall in Adam; for that we are not responsible and deserve no punishment. Nor is it decreed against us simply for our sins; for the present dispensation is a system for regenerating all sinners, whatever they may have done. God loves us for our very weakness; the quality of sinners is one that touches His heart more than that of innocence

even; and He desires our salvation the more earnestly, if it be possible, as we deserve it less. We have the proof of this in the parable of the Prodigal Son. Judas might have found a place in heaven as well as St. Peter, the bad thief as well as the penitent. Reprobation is the consequence only of obduracy, hardness of heart, persistence in refusing the pardon which is offered even up to the last instant of life. In fact many a lost soul has enjoyed more abundant and greater graces than some now in heaven; and among the blessed are some who have been more grievous sinners than some of the lost. But "a hard heart shall fear evil at the last, and he that loveth the danger shall perish in it" (Eccli. iii. 27). Take care not to harden your heart; it may easily grow to a final and fatal hardening.

III. Why has God allowed the reprobate to come into existence? To prevent their existence would be to carry on the natural order by a series of supernatural interferences; and no one would object more to such a thing than the enemies of God themselves. Miracles are rare events; they too occur in accordance with law, and require an adequate cause to produce them, such as prayer, the merits of a holy life, the need of proving a word of God. The reprobate do not furnish an adequate cause for miracles. Fidelity to small graces induces greater ones; obstinate resistance to abundant grace and evidence tends to dry up the stream rather than to promote a more copious flow. It is surely enough for the obstinate sinner that he has the power of escaping from the sentence of reprobation, and that God is ready to help him if he only cares for help. It is for him to accommodate himself to the general laws of being, and not for the whole course of nature to be continually modified in deference to his perversity. The ways of God are inscrutable to your limited vision. Do not expect to penetrate them in this life. Wait with humble faith for the revelation of God's secrets, and say, "I shall be satisfied when Thy glory shall appear" (Ps. xvi. 15).

32.—THE BOOKS OF LIFE AND DEATH.

I. "There shall not enter into it anything defiled . . but they that are written in the book of life of the Lamb' (Apoc. xxi. 27). Certain states used to keep a "Golden Book," in which were written the names, the pedigree, the titles, the services of their distinguished citizens. God has such a book; it is the book of life; and one day it will be opened before all the world. At present no one knows all the names that are written in it. This book is God's consciousness, it is His knowledge of those who are His and will be His for all eternity. The first name is that of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the first-born of mankind. Then follow the names of all the redeemed; first the name of the Virgin Mother of God, who is blessed among women; then the great saints and servants of God; then a "great multitude whom no man can number of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues" (Apoc. vii. 9); and lastly the baptized infants. This book is written outside as well as in. Many names have been written there temporarily; for many have served God for a while with all fidelity, and when they have grown older or encountered temptation they have fallen away and become reprobate, and their names have been erased from that roll of glory. Here are written many names that have never appeared in the catalogues of honour of this world; here are the poor, and the meek, and the mourners, and the persecuted, many whose footprints we should kiss if the secrets of that book were now made known to us. Desire no honour but this: "Rejoice that your names are written in the book of life" (Luke x. 20).

II. In like manner there is a terrible book of death, a book of repudiation and divorce of miserable souls from

their heavenly Spouse. The first in this book is Lucifer, "the king over all the children of pride" (Job xii. 25), then Antichrist, the great leader of the last days against the kingdom of God on earth; then the princes of the army of wickedness, heresiarchs, persecutors of the faith, seducers of the people, leaders of anti-Christian thought, corrupters of innocence, and many whose names have been held in honour by men, and have figured for centuries in history. Then come the ordinary run of sinners, the malicious, the worldly, the avaricious, the careless, and those who have made the most of this life and have not laid up treasures for the next. This book also is written on the outside, inasmuch as many who have held a prominent position there as enemies of God, of the Church, of souls, have repented, and have been transferred by God to the Book of Life. Your name may have once been in this book. Is it there still? O Lord, "see if there be in me the way of iniquity, and lead me in the eternal way" (Ps. cxxxviii. 24).

III. These facts must not discourage us, or make us think that our fate has been already settled, and that it is useless to try to alter a foregone conclusion. Although God knows what will happen, His knowledge does not determine the event; it is still undecided, and depends on our efforts. In like manner God knows whether a ship will ride out a storm, or whether the fields will yield a harvest: but for all that, the result depends on the captain's efforts or the farmer's abour. To renounce all effort is to force God to foresee the failure. Moreover God has said: "If I shall say to the wicked, Thou shalt surely die, and he do penance for his sin, . . . none of his sins which he hath committed shall be imputed to him . . . he shall surely live and not die" (Ezech. xxxiii. 15, 16). The foresight of God is practically as if it did not exist; it does not make labour superfluous. Your destiny still depends on yourself, aided by God. Do your best, persevere to the end, and you will certainly be saved.

33.—THE DISCRIMINATION OF THE GOOD AND BAD.

I. During our present state God's visible dealings are much the same towards the elect and the reprobate, so that we have no means of distinguishing one from the other. "Man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred: but all things are kept uncertain for the time to come, because all things equally happen to the just and to the wicked" (Eccles. ix. 1, 2). If the secret of the future were once made known, it would be equivalent to determining that future and leaving it no longer within man's choice. On the part of the elect, ignorance as to the future keeps them in humility, and urges them to greater holiness so as to make their election sure; and their merit is all the higher for labouring in uncertainty and in hope. The same thing is necessary for the reprobate in order that they may feel that their liberty is not impaired; it stimulates zeal for their conversion; it prevents others from despising them and exalting themselves above them, as they may yet, for all one knows, attain to a high degree of grace and glory. Submit humbly to this curtailment of your curiosity and your knowledge. Work out your salvation in fear and trembling, hoping always for the best, but never presuming upon it.

II. There are certain signs which afford us a reasonable presumption that we are in the grace of God and predestinate, subject, however, to our persevering until death. 1. Some of these are interior. One is the consciousness of a deep longing for the sight of God. Remorse of conscience following immediately on the commission of any sin is a proof that we are not in the state of obduracy. Profound humility; this carries with it a submissiveness to the ordinations of God and His Church, which is a great security, and is also the groundwork of all the virtues. If we have a tender devotion and love towards the Blessed

Virgin, we know that in one important respect the same mind is in us that was also in Christ Jesus. 2. External signs. Among these are austerity of life and being deprived of the pleasures and advantages of this world; for Our Lord has laid it down that we cannot expect to make the best of both worlds, and that, as a matter of equity, the abundance of enjoyment in the one life must be balanced by a lack of it in the other. So also the patient endurance of trials, losses, disappointments, and especially of persecution for our religion, is an important sign. Another one is charity, which covers a multitude of sins; its chief forms are love of our enemies, forgiveness of injuries, and works of beneficence towards those in want. Consider those individually in yourself; see where you fail; resolve to practise them all.

III. Deficiency in some, or even in all these signs, does not, however, afford any presumption as to one's final reprobation; and we must not on that account despair of our own or of others' salvation. The grace of God and prayer are continually working wonders in the supernatural order, and God is for ever raising up stones to be children of Abraham. The power and goodness of God are such as to justify the wildest hopes; discouragement is an insult to Him; despair, even under the most adverse circumstances, is a sin against the Holy Ghost. It is folly to disturb oneself about remote uncertainties and the possible evils of a future day. Your certainties and your duties are quite sufficient to occupy all your thoughts. Dwell rather on the past bounties of God, the assurances of His love, the prodigality of the efforts made by Our Lord to redeem you, the infallible efficacy of persevering prayer, the impossibility of being lost without your deliberate consent. There must always be ground for holy fear when you consider your weakness and fickleness, and the failures of many who had begun well; but confidence should predominate, and God promises that it shall never be confounded.

34.—THE POWER OF GOD.

I. According to our methods of conceiving the Divine Essence, we attribute to it science as understanding all things, foresight or providence as guiding the world, will as commanding, power as executing or producing what has been determined. The power of God is the supplement to all the other perfections, as giving outward effect to them. All beings possess some degree of power; man possesses much; God possesses it perfect in kind, universal in extent, infinite in its capabilities. He is for ever exercising this power. We perceive but small exhibitions of it, relatively speaking. In its completeness it is infinitely beyond all that we have seen of it in nature, or are able to imagine. God alone is worthy of all power: none other is capable of using it rightly. How well it is for you to be in the hands of God! How terrible will be the lot of those who have placed themselves under the power of the evil one! Pray to be preserved from this. Render all your submission to God, and none to any other power except in obedience to the will of God, and so far as it represents Him. "O Adonai Lord, great art Thou, and glorious is Thy power, and no one can overcome Thee. Let all Thy creatures serve Thee . . . there is none that can resist Thy voice" (Judith xvi. 16, 17).

II. Compare the power of God with the power of men. 1. Human power is always abused, it runs to excess and unreason. Consider what power has come to in the hands of tyrants, of the proud, of the covetous, of the lustful, of the intemperate. How seldom has power been used beneficially by rulers, by the rich, by the talented, by the learned! How different it is with God! 2. Human power in even the best-intentioned hands is a failure. It operates always with difficulty; it is thwarted by the opposition of others; it is turned into wrong channels through error; it does not

produce the effects expected of it; it cannot long maintain its vigour, it dwindles and disappears. How different the power of God in each respect! 3. Earthly power is always dependent on the co-operation of others and on favourable circumstances: the greater it is, the more it requires of aid from other sources, and the more numerous are its chances of failure. God is independent; He can do all things alone; He makes use of us but He does not require us. Whether we live or die, succeed or fail, it is of no consequence to the infinite power of God. Whatever power you possess is from God. Endeavour to employ it according to His example. This is necessary if you would succeed. The neglect of this is the source of the strange intricacies of difficulty that so often appear unexpectedly and neutralize our best endeavours.

III. "According to His greatness so also is His mercy with Him" (Eccli. ii. 23). The exhibition of God's mercy is the occasion of the chief exercise of His power. 1. By pardoning our sins so promptly and easily, and remitting their punishment, God shows His absolute control over the sequences of cause and effect. 2. By transferring us from the natural order and leading us to supernatural life through so many obstacles, He proves that all creatures are plastic in His hands, that His resources are infinite, and that the impassable barriers between the two orders yield at His word. 3. The mercy of God is the source and the motive of all the great mysteries of power wrought in the Incarnation, and the Church, and the Saints, and the Sacraments. God communicates to us both His mercy and His power. He calls upon us to be instruments of His work, and to help Him by co-operation in the advancement of His glory, resistance to evil, the salvation of souls. For this purpose He places some of His power in our hands as His delegates. Use it well, and thank Him for fulfilling in you the promise made of old: "They that fear Thee shall be great with Thee in all things" (Judith xvi. 19)

35.—THE BEATITUDE OF GOD.

I. Following the order of our thought, we come at last, after describing nature, faculties, and action, to what we consider as their completion and fruition. This, both in God, in angels, and in men, is beatitude, or perfect happiness. This happiness requires 1. The possession of all that is good. Our experience is that, if anything remains unattained or unattainable, we are unquiet and unhappy. God has in Himself the totality of all good, and every perfection and virtue. 2. The absence of all drawbacks. Nothing is wanting to God. There is no imperfection or deficiency in Him, and sin cannot approach Him. Nothing of His can deteriorate, or be injured, or be taken from Him. 3. The attainment of all desires. God suffices for Himself. The infinite possession and enjoyment of Himself leaves no desire unfulfilled. The possession of God is the universal beatitude of all beings, it fills up the measure of their happiness. As the source and cause of all this, God possesses it infinitely in Himself. The miseries of this life, surpassing its good and happiness often, are a trial to us. It is a satisfaction to know that they are transient, and that the one thing which will survive all others and be predominant for ever is infinite happiness. Many indeed will never enjoy it; but it is there for all who care for it, and who will but stretch forth their hands to grasp it. This is the solution of all the mysteries of this life; this is the remedy for all its evils.

II. The active enjoyment by God of supreme happiness consists not in material and sensible satisfactions, but in the perfect exercise and satisfaction of the divine intelligence and will. These faculties must of course be exercised upon the Divinity itself, which is supreme reality, truth and goodness, and independently of which no good thing exists. In order that the excellencies and perfections of a being may be a source of enjoyment to it, there must necessarily be

this reflex action of the mind on itself and on its internal perfections. The contemplation and possession of an infinite object, Himself, is the source of the infinite satisfaction and beatitude of God. This same infinite object will be offered to your contemplation and love some day, and will be the source of a corresponding enjoyment. You will live with the divine supernatural life, and taste of God's own beatitude. "They shall be inebriated with the plenty of Thy house, and Thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of Thy pleasure. For with Thee is the fountain of life, and in Thy light we shall see light" (Ps. xxxv. 9, 10). None of the pleasures of earth are comparable to this. Desire this alone. Do not be so foolish as to barter it away for the sake of the brief, insufficient, and degrading satisfactions of sin.

III. The beatitude of God is infinitely beyond all the beatitude of creatures, even beyond that which they will receive from the possession of God. He indeed is infinite, but their capacity is finite, and they apprehend Him according to that measure. In God there is the double infinity; the object of the beatific enjoyment is infinite, and the subject—the faculties which apprehend it—are infinite. The Saints have sometimes been admitted, while on earth, to see, as it were, the skirts of God's glory as He passed by; and the sight has ravished them out of their senses into ecstasy. The splendour of God's glory is so intense that man shall not see Him, in the flesh, and live. How great will be the happiness of those whose lives shall be such as to merit for them the full sight of God's face! And how much beyond this must be the happiness of God in the enjoyment of His own Divinity! Rejoice with Him that He possesses this supreme beatitude. He is worthy of it all for His infinite perfection in Himself and His infinite goodness to you. Pray earnestly to be admitted one day to the contemplation of this glory. Prepare yourself carefully so as to enjoy it in the fullest measure.

MEDITATIONS ON CHRISTIAN DOGMA.

TREATISE II.

THE BLESSED TRINITY.

1.—THE EXCELLENCIES OF THE TRINITY.

I. Comparing infinity with infinity, so far as such a thing is possible, we may say that the Blessed Trinity surpasses all other mysteries in that it is more incomprehensible, and further removed above our capacities, and beyond the attempts of our curiosity. It is like the sun, which blinds the eye that gazes on it; like a boundless ocean which an infant looks at from the shore. We know so little, after all, of this world, of the structure of our being, of our fellow-men, of the productions of the human mind; how can we fathom the mysterious mode of existence of the Maker of all? The angels, pure spirits, of immense natural powers, and supernaturally illumined, although always exercising themselves in acts of knowledge, will never succeed in comprehending the secret of the infinite life. And men, living but a short space here, only just beginning to read the secrets of this world, occupied much with material things, blinded by conceit and sensuality, presume to criticize and pass sentence on the most recondite mysteries of God, and to deny the existence of anything that they have not seen and touched. From the incomprehensible nature of the Trinity learn humbly to acknowledge your incapacity. Be thankful to God for revealing it to you, and for according you the infused habit of faith which enables you to perceive the truth and believe it. This is the first step towards the clear knowledge of it in eternity.

II. Antiquity and unchanging stability always command our wonder and respect. The Blessed Trinity is the most ancient of all mysteries. The other mysteries, the Creation, the Incarnation, the Redemption, the Immaculate Conception, the Blessed Sacrament, have taken place in time, so long ago, and at a definite date. Not so with the Blessed

Trinity. It existed before time was. It goes back to the depths of eternity. It always was. It never began nor ended; it is in action now, and is not a past event. It is the mode of God's existence, a vital action always subsistent. "O beauty ever ancient and ever new" (St. Aug.), never beginning, never ending! How modern and temporary are all things else! What are the kingdoms of the world, the beginnings of history, the epochs of geological time, the first formation of this earth, the remote commencements of the stars when they slowly consolidated themselves out of the nebular mists of scattered atoms—what is all this to the antiquity of the mystery of the Trinity? How miserable is your short life compared with this! Confess your insignificance and glorify God.

III. As, in the natural order, God is the source whence all things proceed and to which they will all return, so, in the supernatural order, the Blessed Trinity is the central point of all mysteries and divine operations. In the work of creation a special function is attributed, by appropriation, to each of the Divine Persons, and so also in the system of grace and supernatural life by which mankind are brought to God. Thus the Trinity may be called the source of these mysteries. It is also their object, or the end to which they all return; for the purpose of them is the exhibition of the divine operations, and the manifestation externally of the glory of the Holy Trinity. The Second Person, as man, made known the Father and the Holy Ghost. He communicated them to us. He instituted the eternal sacrifice commenced on Calvary, to restore to them the dominion which had been overthrown by sin. The Trinity constitutes the beatitude of God and the final end and beatitude of all creatures, angels and men. It is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. So it is with you personally. You are on earth for a very brief interval to work out your return to the God whence you proceeded. Never deviate from this, your one and sole object.

2.—THE KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE OF THE TRINITY.

I. The mystery of the Blessed Trinity far transcends the intelligence of man, yet it is not, on that account, altogether beyond his reach. He is able to apprehend it in some degree even during this life. And it must needs be so. Man is made by the Holy Trinity; he is made for the glory of the Trinity; and he is to be made happy by the possession of the Trinity hereafter. Therefore he is adapted by his constitution and his faculties to possess a certain understanding of it here and hereafter; and he can accommodate himself to it in this life if he will. Man's knowledge of the Trinity at present is obscure, it rests upon faith, and not upon sight or complete evidence; but in the next world it will rest on direct vision and perception. In view of this, man has been made in the image and likeness of the Trinity; and the vestiges of that mystery have been imprinted on various parts of creation for his instruction. Although those indications are hardly such as to suggest the nature of God's being apart from revelation, still they corroborate the doctrine and illustrate it when it has once been made known. Angels and men alone out of creatures are able to recognize the Triune God. It is the special distinction and dignity of intelligent beings. This knowledge, scanty as it now is, is of far higher import to you than all the science of mundane things. Let it be always the light and consolation of your life.

II. Further, the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity is the distinctive mark of Christianity, separating it from the systems of the Jews, Mohammedans, Unitarians. Without this there can be no proper knowledge of the character of Jesus Christ as Son of God, no comprehension of His great work as Redeemer, no real and efficient belief in Him. It must be known and accepted fully in order to membership in the kingdom of God on earth. The Trinity

is the object proposed for our attainment in the future life. To attain it, man needs to know whither he is going, to direct his efforts accordingly, and to prepare himself intellectually and spiritually. So the Trinity is one of the great truths which must be accepted as a matter of rigorous precept together with the Unity of God, the future life, and the Incarnation and Death of Our Lord. Meditate on this great doctrine, and try to fathom its secrets as far as may be granted to you on earth. How lamentable it is that so many millions should be absolutely ignorant of it, and that so many others, nominally Christians, should practically neglect it! Make it your duty to extend the knowledge of it.

III. It is more important to love the Blessed Trinity than to understand it, to honour it than to scrutinize it. We are bidden to love the Lord Our God with all our heart, and soul, and strength, and mind; there is no command to comprehend Him thoroughly, to investigate deeply, to speak learnedly. On the contrary, we are told that if we search too far into His majesty we shall be overwhelmed by the glory (Prov. xxv. 27). Difficulties increase with greater knowledge, at the outset. A moderate knowledge suffices to furnish the basis of an exceedingly great affection. In this life at least, the illumination of the intelligence need not necessarily keep pace with the inflaming of our will. By knowledge we draw the object towards our minds, which are not capacious enough to contain it; by love we are drawn into the divine object, and it is great enough to contain and to satisfy our hearts. Rejoice that you have at least one faculty which is capable of entering into intimate union with the Blessed Trinity. If your curiosity is thwarted, at any rate you can give full rein to your affections. Your love here will be the measure of your understanding of divine things in the next world. Seek always for knowledge, but with the practical object of increasing your love.

3.—MEANS OF HONOURING THE TRINITY.

I. There are many motives for our paying particular honour to God as made known to us in the mystery of the Trinity. Consider 1. Its sovereign grandeur and excellence: nothing is so majestic and so deserving of our homage. 2. The goodness and liberality shown to us by each of the Divine Persons. We have been predestined to eternal life, created to the image of God, endowed with all that we have, preserved by continual care, redeemed, and sanctified, and raised to the supernatural life. 3. The utility which will accrue to us from honouring the three Divine Persons. Although our gratitude and service should be something more than the expectation of future favours, we are permitted, with David, to take account of the recompense; this will help us to value God's graces more, and we shall receive of them in greater abundance. 4. The example of others; of Our Lord Jesus Christ first of all; then of His most Blessed Mother, whose soul magnified the Lord; of the Seraphim who exclaim continually, Holy! Holy! Holy! and of all the saints of the Church. Regret that you are able to do so little for the glory of the three Divine Persons in return for all that they have been to you and have done for you. Regret your past negligence and forgetfulness. Praise each Person separately for His special benefits to you.

II. There are various ways in which you may honour the Holy Trinity. 1. By correcting all habits of mortal sin which destroy the indwelling of God with you, and all venial sins which diminish the divine influence. 2. By refraining from all unprofitable employments and unnecessary recreations which waste the precious time in which you might glorify God. 3. By invoking the Holy Trinity, and in particular by making the Sign of the Cross frequently and rev-

erently. 4. By humbling yourself before this great mystery, and recognizing your vileness and unworthiness, and veiling your face, as it were, before God. 5. By rejoicing at the infinite greatness and excellence of the Trinity in each of its magnificent perfections. 6. By promoting the knowledge, and love, and service of the Blessed Trinity among the ignorant and the sinful. Resolve to carry out some or all of these practices of devotion. Above all assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, in which you can unite with the Adorable Victim in rendering to God an adequate adoration, and gratitude, and reparation for your sins.

III. The best foundation we can lay for a life of devotion and honour towards the Holy Trinity is to meditate profoundly on its marvels in its different aspects, and on the great attributes of God. This is the most sublime of all matter for meditation, and it belongs especially to those who have risen high in spirituality. It is more akin to the contemplations of the blessed in heaven than many of the other subjects on which we are obliged to exercise ourselves while in this land of darkness and sin. It raises our minds at once into a more lofty and tranquil sphere of thought, that is not only superior to our material surroundings and our infirmities, but also to the highest level of our natural powers. In the purgative way we dwell on our sins and their consequences ; in the illuminative way we contemplate the virtues befitting our present state as shown in the earthly life of the Son of God ; but the consideration of God in His Essence, of the perfections manifested by Him in the higher life, belongs to the unitive way. Such meditation ought to have a very pronounced effect on our thoughts and on our lives. It should move us to a great contempt of the world and its vanities, a great appreciation of the beauty and grandeur of the Divinity, an ardent desire to see the face of God, generosity of self-sacrifice and labour, and familiarity in advance with the occupations of our future life.

4.—THE PROCESSION OF THE DIVINE PERSONS.

I. All that the universe has it derives from God, and in every one of its elements it represents some quality that exists in God. The great fact in the universe is life. Life is fecundity, each living creature producing further life of its own kind. There is no sterility except in death. Visible life witnesses to life in God, and fecundity therefore witnesses to His fecundity. Fecundity of life is a higher quality than sterility and loneliness; it must exist therefore in God in an infinite form as a perfection. The world manifests the extrinsic activity of the divine energy; there must be a greater, an infinite activity, within the being of God, and this activity cannot end in sterility. The Almighty Himself asks: "Shall not I, that make others bring forth, Myself bring forth? Shall I, that give generation to others, be barren? saith the Lord thy God" (Isa. lxvi. 9). The supreme exemplar of all fecundity must then be found in God. The persons of the Blessed Trinity are the accomplishment of the divine life, and action, and fecundity. Our souls are gifted with fecundity by God; they should produce divine thoughts and good deeds. Too often they exhibit a fecundity as to frivolities and sins, and a sterility as to spiritual fruits. Reverse this order in yourself; strive to be dead towards the world and self, but alive towards God.

II. God is supreme life. Life is activity. Every being acts with the fulness of its energies. God, therefore, must have in every way an infinite action; and this, from the fact of being infinite, must be intrinsic and within the substance of God; because there can be no infinity but that which is in God and is God. Now, action is movement; and the most adequate movement of a being is that by which it

produces something equal to itself and of the same nature. There must then be a procession (or a production), of the same nature as God, and within the Godhead. God is supreme goodness. Now, "goodness is diffusive of itself." Although creation manifests an incalculable goodness and diffusiveness from God, this is not infinite; and from that fact it does not amount to a full and adequate exercise of the divine goodness and diffusiveness. There must be an infinite communication of goodness, and this, of necessity, must be within the Godhead. This is accomplished in the procession of the Divine Persons. You have activities and good gifts from God. Exercise them in their fulness, and diffuse them for the benefit of others. Your spiritual life is death unless it manifests itself by active charity and production of good.

III. A spiritual being has two faculties, intelligence and will; and by these it developes, according to its capacity, knowledge and love. In God these faculties produce infinite personified Wisdom, the Divine Son, and infinite personified Love, the Holy Ghost. Each Person proceeding, as being the term (or *effect*, speaking incorrectly) of infinite action, is infinite, is within the Godhead, and is God; and hence they do not constitute three infinities or three Gods. Thus God is not solitary, wrapped in a sterile contemplation and love of the Divine Essence. There is plurality in Him, as to the Persons; yet there is no division, no substantial separation of the Persons. There is a most perfect Unity, and not a mere union of three infinities. The Persons exist together, and in one another, in the indivisible infinite Godhead. How marvellous is this revelation of the secret of existence of the Divinity! All the wisdom of the world cannot arrive at the discovery of it; but it is the inheritance and firm possession of those little ones who possess the divine gift of faith. As to those from whom it is hidden, how inadequate and worthless must be their merely human notions of the divine nature!

5.—THE RELATIONS OF THE DIVINE PERSONS.

I. The distinction of the personalities in the Trinity is constituted by the relations resulting from the intrinsic activity of the One God. Life, in modern language, is responsiveness to environment; or, action produces relativity. How is this? Action is a kind of movement; movement involves a *thence* and a *thither;* it must have a subject, an object, and a point of communication between them. Thus human activity is composed of our relations to God, men, and things. Relation is the connecting together of distinct things. A complete drawing together would be unity; a complete separation would be plurality; perfect relation consists of the two things; it is plurality in unity. For instance our bodily life is unity of action in plurality of organs; intellectual life is unity of consciousness with plurality of thoughts; a State is *unum e pluribus.* The relation becomes more perfect as the unity is founded on a fuller similarity of nature between the two things related. The internal activity of God involves internal relationships, and those of the most perfect kind, *i.e.* with a most perfect community of nature. God is Life; the highest activity of life is fecundity; and this is the chief source of plurality in unity. God is Goodness; and goodness, communicating itself, involves unity and plurality. God is Beauty; and beauty arises from harmony in multiplicity. All this involves that there be in God some form of supreme plurality in unity. Your relations are with God and your neighbour. Religion is the regulation of these. Charity is your highest activity, binding you to God and men.

II. The perfection of the divine life and activity involves the existence of relations within the Godhead itself, that is, of plurality in unity. God must be supremely one and indivisible. There cannot be two infinite beings; the fact of multiplication would be in contradiction to the idea of supremacy and infinity. What kind of plurality, then, is

possible simultaneously with this unity? Only a plurality of relationship arising from the action of the one Being within His own substance. We must not then conceive of the Trinity as resulting from the coalition of three separate individuals into a higher unity, but as a supreme unity which produces within itself the terms of its operations. Such a plurality, far from being a contradiction of unity, requires for its perfection that there be absolute unity of substance. There is a sort of parallel in nature. A body has three dimensions, length, breadth, thickness. These are distinct from one another; they are not, however, separate beings combined into one; they are relations existing in the one substance. The plurality of relations requires the unity of the one solid body. So in the Divinity, a supreme unity is necessary in order that there be an intrinsic activity producing relationships within it. Adore this incomprehensible mystery and thank God for granting you some indication, however obscure, of the grandeurs of His Divine Nature.

III. The relations arising from the activity of the divine intellect and will result in three distinct conscious personalities. There are terms or objects of the activities, and reciprocal relations between those terms making them separate, though within the same unity of substance. Each of the terms is a Person conscious of His individuality. The Divine Essence communicates all its attributes in its intrinsic productive action, and each Person therefore is God. The Divine Essence, as the source of the activity and the relations, is the Father; the same Divine Essence, as the term of the action of the divine intellect, is the Son; the Divine Essence, as the term of the love of Father and Son, is the Holy Ghost. There are parallels to this in man. Man generates a son, who is a separate personality; he generates an idea, and this exists *in the unity* of his substance. God's one activity combines the two things. Its term is separate as a personality and is one in the same substance. Adore and admire.

6.—THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE DIVINE PERSONS.

I. The three supreme perfections of the Divinity are Power, Wisdom and Goodness. To these three may be reduced all the other attributes of God. For instance, under the head of Power may be classed strength, immortality, immutability, universal dominion; to Wisdom belong omniscience, knowledge, the sight of all things, providence or the guiding of all things; and Goodness comprises mercy, love, patience, clemency. These perfections are qualities of the Divine Essence, and with it they are equally present in each of the three Persons. Father, Son and Holy Ghost possess in all respects the same power, wisdom, and goodness; and they operate equally in all external action in the world and in the souls of men. These same perfections are communicated to men in the finite form of qualities or virtues. But no one of us possesses them perfectly, or even simultaneously. One is distinguished by power, but he may be wanting in wisdom: another one may be wise but deficient in goodness. How miserable you are as compared with these infinite perfections in God! Glorify Him on account of them. Ask Him for some participation in each of them, and the grace to use it well.

II. Although these three great perfections are common to all the Divine Persons, yet we attribute them specially, "by appropriation," to the different Persons respectively. According to our ways of thinking, each perfection seems to have a particular appropriateness to the personal characteristics of the Father, Son, or Holy Ghost. Thus, the Father, as the first principle in the Trinity, is spoken of as if He were more than the other Persons, the first principle and Creator of the universe; and we call Him the Almighty.

The Son, as proceeding by an act of the intelligence, is named the Wisdom of the Eternal; all things are said to have been made through Him; and to Him are attributed the governing and the judging of the world, as if these functions were exclusively His. The Holy Ghost, as proceeding by an act of the will and being the mutual love of Father and Son, is spoken of as Goodness or Love; and we attribute to Him all holy inspirations and the operations of divine grace, and particularly the mystery of the Incarnation. You have already the special sign of each of the Divine Persons on you. You are immortal henceforth like the Eternal Father, you are adopted into sonship through the Second Person, you are the temple of the Holy Ghost. Ask each Person to bestow on you His own appropriate quality according to the duties on which you are engaged.

III. We are allowed to consider each of the perfections separately, and to glorify each of the Divine Persons separately on account of the perfection specially appropriated to Him. We may worship the Divinity in its Unity, or the Trinity in its completeness, or any one Person alone. God Himself has manifested His three Persons separately. In the early times mankind knew only of one Person, the first principle and Creator. After long centuries God the Son was made known in the person of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and received due homage and adoration. In turn He revealed to us the Holy Ghost, and sent Him upon us to consolidate the work of redemption. We may worship the Father as Creator, the Son as Redeemer, the Holy Ghost as Sanctifier; or we may consider the three Persons as our Father, our Brother, our Beloved. Again, when we feel conscious of our weakness and misery, we may ask the Father to strengthen us; when we are oppressed by the sense of ignorance and blindness and folly, we may ask the Eternal Wisdom to enlighten us; when we tremble for our malice and perversity, we may ask the Spirit of Sweetness and Holiness to enkindle in us His heavenly flame.

7.—GOD THE FATHER.

I. The distinction of the personalities within the Blessed Trinity depends on the interior relations which spring out of the action of the divine intelligence and will. There are various aspects hence arising, which do not belong to the Divine Essence as such, but are peculiar to one or other of the Persons and not common to all. These are the only differences between the Persons. They are not differences of substance or of the essential divine attributes; so they mark, not a multiplication of the Godhead, but of the personalities in the one Godhead. The chief characteristic peculiarity of the First Person is Innascibility; *i.e.* He is unbegotten, unborn, and does not in any way proceed from any other. This belongs to the Father alone; for God the Son proceeds from God the Father, and God the Holy Ghost from the Father and Son jointly. The Divine Essence is in the Father without being communicated by any other; and the infinite intelligence whose activity constitutes His relation to the Son is from no other source. On the other hand, the Divine Essence is in the Son and Holy Ghost by way of communication; and Their relationships to the Father and to one another are in Them by way of production (or procession). In view of this personal quality we speak of the *Eternal Father*, appropriating the term to Him as if it were predominantly His; although the Son and Holy Ghost are equally eternal. Adore profoundly this singular and supreme quality in God the Father. No other being has even a resemblance to it.

II. A second peculiarity constituting the First Person of the Blessed Trinity is His Paternity. It belongs to Him alone to be the eternal Father of God the Son. God the

Holy Ghost does not share it with Him. This is the supreme glory of the Father, by reason of the infinite superiority of the Divine Son and the intrinsic action producing Him, over the external productions of divine action in creation. All the universe, including the angels, does not amount to an adequate reflection of the divine infinity, as does God the Son; nor does it render infinite homage and love to its first principle, as the Son does. The divine paternity is the original and model paternity, the source and exemplar of all production of life, whether by God Himself or by His creatures. So St. Paul refers to "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom all paternity in heaven and earth is named" (Eph. iii. 14, 15). So jealous is the Father of this prerogative that He would not allow the Divine Son coming on earth to have a father according to the flesh, but only a mother. He is the only Father, Jesus is the only Son. Rejoice that this paternity has given us a Redeemer, and a first-born of our race who is infinite. It is a glory to us as well as to the Father.

III. God the Father is also in a special way the first principle or source of all being, and it is attributed to Him by appropriation. The Son and Holy Ghost are, equally with the Father, the principle of creation; the Son is further, with the Father, the principle of the Holy Ghost: but the Father is alone the principle of the Son. St. Dionysius calls the Father the principle of the Divinity; not that He produces the Divinity, but because He communicates it to the Son and Holy Ghost. For these reasons we speak of the Father as if He were more especially the final end of all being, although the Son and Holy Ghost are equally our end and beatitude. All things must rise to the height of their source; so all being cries aloud with St. Philip, "Lord, show us the Father and it is enough for us" (John xiv. 8). God is really your Father, by creation, by His love, and by communicating to you His own supernatural life by grace. Live as His son, and love Him as a son.

8.—JESUS CHRIST AND THE FATHER.

I. Jesus Christ as man shows us an example of profound *respect* towards God the Father: 1. He addresses the Father in terms of honour, as "Just Father, Holy Father, Lord of heaven and earth. Abba, Father, all things are possible to Thee." 2. He exhibits a profound deference and humility towards His Father, prostrating Himself when praying, as in the Garden of Gethsemani. "In the days of His flesh, offering up prayers and supplications, He was heard for His reverence" (Heb. v. 7). 3. During His life, in all His actions He sought, not His own glory or pleasure, but His Father's. He led men to the knowledge and love of Him, He exalted Him in His preaching, He allowed Himself to be angered at one thing only, the profanation of the house of God. He attributes to the Father His own greatness and all His wonderful works: "I live by the Father" (John vi. 58). "The Father who abideth in Me, He doth the works" (John xiv. 10). Imitate your great model in this regard. Show the most profound veneration in word and deed towards God, His name, His presence, His house, His representative the Church, His commands, His teachings. Avoid the smallest flippancy, carelessness, familiarity towards His infinite and most awful Majesty, before which the angels stand abashed.

II. Our Lord also manifested a vivid filial *confidence* in the Father. Before He came into the world He said by the mouth of David: "From My mother's womb Thou art My God; depart not from Me. For tribulation is very near; for there is none to help Me" (Ps. xxi. 11, 12). On every occasion, in every need, He has recourse to His Father, to preserve His flock from evil, to sanctify them, to pardon His

enemies, to co-operate in His miracles. He prepares for His daily work by spending the whole night in prayer; He returns thanks for His works when accomplished: "Father, I give Thee thanks that Thou hast heard Me, and I knew that Thou hearest Me always" (John xi. 41, 42). Above all, Our Lord's confidence appears when He seeks support under His fearful burden on the night before His Passion, and when commending His soul into His Father's hands on the Cross. Job had already indicated this when he said: "Although He should kill Me, I will trust in Him" (Job xiii. 15). Always remember the omnipotence, the love, the promises of your heavenly Father. Ground your confidence on vivid faith and holy life, and it will never be disappointed. Few have real confidence; fewer still can maintain it under necessary trial and delay; and because they waver they do not merit to receive anything from the Lord (James i. 6, 7).

III. Above all others the absorbing sentiment of Our Lord was *love* for His Father in heaven. This love extended to the works of God made in His image and likeness, that is, to man. Love was the motive which drew Him from heaven in order that He might vindicate the glory of His Father, and save our souls from destruction, by restoring under another form the order of salvation which Satan's malevolence had overthrown. Divine love, embracing zeal for God's glory and man's salvation, was the fire which Our Lord brought on earth and wished to see enkindled in our hearts (Luke xii. 49). It was this same love too that led Our Saviour to His bitter death, as we learn from His words on leaving the supper-room for Gethsemani: "That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given Me commandment, so do I. Arise, let us go hence" (John xiv. 31). Let the love of God predominate in your heart, animate all your life, and drive out all that is opposed to it. This secures the fulfilment of all the law and the pardon of all sins; it is the sum of all religion.

9.—THE SECOND PERSON, AS THE WORD.

I. "Who shall declare His generation?" (Isa. liii. 8). The procession of the Persons in the Trinity is an ineffable mystery, deep in the secret recesses of the Godhead, never to be thoroughly comprehended. Scripture, however, conveys sufficient indications of it to guide our faith. The Second Person is called the Word by St. John. He is a Word that is in God, an internal word spoken to Himself; otherwise, a thought. St. Paul speaks of the Son of God as being "the brightness of His glory, the figure of His substance, the word (or expression) of His power" (Heb. i. 3), and also as the "image of God" (Col. i. 15). The Old Testament speaks of God the Son in a veiled manner as the Wisdom of God. "It is a vapour of the power of God, and a certain pure emanation of the glory of Almighty God. It is the brightness of eternal light, and the unspotted mirror of God's majesty, and the image of His goodness. And being one it can do all things; and remaining in itself the same it reneweth all things" (Wisd. vii. 25-27). These passages convey to us some notion of the nature and of the proceeding of the Second Person from the First in the Trinity. This divine Word first proceeds internally in the spiritual being of God; secondly it proceeds externally in a visible form to convey to created intelligences the thought of God, and this is Jesus Christ the Word of God made flesh. You must produce the Word of God, the image of God, Jesus Christ, in your soul and actions by supernatural virtue and the reception of the Blessed Sacrament.

II. The names thus applied to the Second Person indicate the mode of His proceeding from the First. This is not corporeal, but intellectual and spiritual. A human mind conceives a thought, an image. This is inseparable from the mind, and yet it is different from the mind. God is a pure intelligence; His essential action is intellectual. His intelligence fixes its regard on the totality of truth and

reality, that is, the Divine Essence itself. The perception of this is a full, and therefore infinite image of God's substance, and is the adequate expression, or word, of His being. This perception is the product of the full exercise of God's infinite activity; it is equal to that action; that is, it is infinite; that is, it is God. So perfect is this reflection of God in His own intelligence that it is itself the Divinity as communicated: and the conscious action produces a conscious reflex action, each equal to the other, each existing in the same substance, and differing from one another only in that one produces and the other is produced. How mysterious are the wonders of Infinite Being! They are utterly beyond our powers of discovery. Thank God for having granted you a glimpse of them as in a glass and in a dark manner, while waiting for the revelation of the perfect day.

III. The production of the Word of God, the Second Person, is an eternal action; it is not something which has taken place in a remote past; it never began or ended; it is always in progress; it is the actual mode of God's existence. This action also is necessary and inevitable. It is not the association in equal dignity of a second (and of a third) being with one who is already all-sufficient; but it is that the Infinite Being has an infinite action in Himself, and this action has an infinity and reality of effect which is without example in our limited experience of finite actions. The productive action in the Trinity is within the infinite circle of God's substance, so that there is no multiplication or increase of the Divinity. The terms of the operations in God are called Persons; the word is our nearest approximation to an ineffable fact, and we must beware of being misled by its current untheological sense of individuals who are substantially distinct from one another. Ask God to enlighten your understanding, to strengthen your faith, and to manifest Himself to you in this mystery.

10.—THE SECOND PERSON, AS SON.

I. "What is His name and what is the name of His Son, if thou knowest?" (Prov. xxx. 4). The Second Person is presented to us not only as the Word of God and the Image of God, but also as the Son of God. This last is the expression most frequently used in Holy Scripture, and it opens to us a new vista of mystery. The production of the Word is the supreme intellectual operation in God; and it is also a generation or begetting, according to the passage: "Thou art My Son, to-day have I begotten Thee" (Ps. ii. 7). The relation, then, of the First Person to the Second is that of Father to Son. All that exists in creation is in God supereminently. He is the model of all being and all action. So the internal productive action of God by which the Word proceeds is the first example and the most perfect of all subsequent external production both by God and by creatures. From this "all paternity in heaven and earth is named" (Eph. iii. 15). That transcendent generation, and paternity, and sonship are represented in only an imperfect degree in creation. In imitation of it men are made sons of God, and He is our Father; and this not figuratively, but really, by the transmission of His likeness and supernatural life. So says St. John; we are "born of Him;" we are named and we are the "sons of God" (1 John ii. 29; iii. 1). And St. Paul adopts the expression of the Greek poet; we are the "offspring of God" (Acts xvii. 29). On a lower level still, there is a more imperfect and material representation of the divine fecundity in human generation and offspring. Remember that our sonship is not figurative for being spiritual, but is the more real inasmuch as it approaches nearer to the likeness of the divine generation. God is most really your Father, and has the sentiments of a father most perfectly. The Church too is in a very real sense your mother. Act worthily of this.

II. The procession of the Second Person is aptly termed a begetting, and the Second Person is adequately the Son

of the First, because He proceeds from the living substance of the Father, and is of the same nature and identical substance. This is a more perfect generation than what we are acquainted with on earth. With us there is a multiplication of the personality and of the substance in a specific unity of nature. In God it is only the conscious personality which is multiplied; the substance remains one and the same in both Persons as well as the nature: so there is a much more complete and noble unity. You too, being made a son of God, are also "partaker of the divine nature" (2 Pet. i. 4). What a splendid dignity! But it requires that there be conformity of action. Your life must be divine, and not a mere worldly animal one.

III. Another point in paternity is that the offspring is the reproduction of the parent, inheriting, with the blood, character, gifts, defects, facial resemblance, etc. This constituent element of Sonship is also in the Second Person. He not only possesses the Divine Essence by communication, as does also the Holy Ghost, but also has personal resemblance to the Father, reproducing the Divine Essence in His perfect likeness to the Father. This is, as we have seen, His special quality as the "Word of God." He is the intellectual image and perfect reflection of the Divine Nature. This is peculiar to the Second Person, considered as to the mode of His procession, and not to the Third, whose mode of production is not that of intellectual reflection, but of the propension of the Divine Will, loving the Divine Essence as Supreme Good. The Second Person has also a further personal likeness to the Father in that He shares with Him in the quality of being the principle of a Third Person in the Most Holy Trinity. You must make your sonship perfect by cultivating the likeness to God. You will learn this in Jesus Christ. Reproduce in yourself His sentiments, His actions, His endurance of suffering; so that He may not be ashamed to acknowledge you as His second self.

11.—QUALITIES OF THE DIVINE SONSHIP.

I. The Sonship of the Second Person, although true and real, differs in some important respects from that which is in Nature, and must not be judged of according to this last. In Nature, the father exists before the son. In God that is not the case, but Father and Son are equally eternal. So the Eternal Son speaks under the name of Wisdom in the Old Testament: "I was set up from eternity, and of old before the earth was made. The depths were not as yet, and I was already conceived . . . before the hills I was brought forth" (Prov. viii. 23, 25). In nature, a being may exist and is perfect without offspring. In God the production of the Eternal Son is not a voluntary circumstance, but is the necessary mode of God's existence; it is the essential activity of the divine intellect. So the Father did not exist before the Son; He did not generate the Son at a definite epoch which is now past. The generation of the Son is outside the limits of time: it has no past, present, future; it is the actual activity of God. So the Father can always say: "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee" (Ps. ii. 7). The divine generation is co-extensive with the divine life; just as a man is reflected in a mirror the very instant he places himself before it; just as the force of attraction comes into effect between masses of matter simultaneously with their existence, without delay and without deliberation. Adore Our Lord Jesus Christ for this wonderful prerogative of His, when you contemplate Him in the arms of His Blessed Mother or dying on the cross. He existed in time, yet "His going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity" (Mich. v. 2).

II. In nature, the offspring is inferior to, and dependent on the parent, and owes a duty of submission. This is not

the case in the Blessed Trinity. The Son is, and always has been, equal to the Father in all things. The Father possesses not a particle more of the Divinity and its perfections than the Son; for the Father begets the Son with all the fulness of His infinite activity, and communicates to Him the Divine Essence in its completeness. The Son is as necessary in the Divinity as the Father; the one cannot be Father without the existence of the other to constitute the relationship. There is necessarily the consciousness of infinite activity, and the consciousness of reflex activity; and this action and reaction are equal. St. Paul speaks of this dignity: "Christ Jesus, being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal to God" (Phil. ii. 6); and straightway he speaks of Our Lord as humbled to the death of the cross. Hence learn that real dignity must be associated with humility.

III. The Sonship of the Second Person is the model of our sonship to the Eternal Father. He is Son by communication of the Divine Essence; we are sons by adoption and the communication of the divine life of grace. God "has given us very great and precious promises; that by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. i. 4). He communicates Himself to us, as the Divine Essence to the Son. We too, being born of God by grace, abide in Him, as the Son proceeds from the Father and abides in Him. As the Divine Son is eternally proceeding from the Father, so we are continually receiving a new access of life from Him. All that the Father has is given to the Son, so we too shall inherit a certain fulness of glory and beatitude in His kingdom. What wonderful privileges belong to you as member of Christ's body through His Church! But everything that is worth having costs something even when it comes to us from God. Is it not worth while to pay any price in the way of mortifying your passions, suffering persecutions and working hard for such privileges?

12.—THE THIRD PERSON.

I. In a spiritual being the fundamental fact is its existence, and from this proceeds a double activity, inseparable from the being but different from it. The first activity is the intellect, which exercises itself on objects as being true, and its exercise is knowledge, reason, wisdom. The next is the will, which exercises itself in love, or a propension towards objects as being good. These are two distinct operations, and are essential to completeness and to one another. The intelligence is the basis; the propension of the will proceeds from this, and constitutes its efficacy. The intelligence brings the object, in a manner, into itself by conceiving its image: love is a going forth and bestowal of self upon the object. Here we have plurality of operations in the unity of one being; they cannot be separated from it or from one another; and they embrace the whole activity of a spiritual being. These faculties represent two great classes of duties in man, the knowledge and love of God, the service of mind and heart. Exercise them both on the only object that can elicit and satisfy all their activity, *i.e.*, on God.

II. These spiritual faculties and actions exist in God and correspond to ours, but they are infinite. The action of the divine will is in several respects similar to the action of the intellect which produces the Second Person, or the Word. 1. It is not transient or arbitrary, but is a necessity of the divine nature and is eternal; it never begins, it never took place, it is always in progress. 2. As it is an action in God, and as there is nothing in God that is not God, so this action or love is God. Otherwise, it is God acting in that way, for God is pure activity. 3. As the Divine Essence with the relations engendered in it by the action of the intellect is Father and Son, so the Divine Essence with the relations engendered in it by the action of the will is the

Holy Ghost. 4. As it is with the action of the intellect producing the Son, so with the action of the will there must be two terms, that from which it proceeds and that towards which it moves. The Father and Son jointly are the term producing, the Holy Ghost is the term produced. 5. Like the intellect, the will of God has an infinite activity; it communicates the totality of the Divine Essence; and this so perfectly as to produce a conscious personality which is God. 6. As the Son is the fulness of the divine intelligence and the object produced by its action, so the Holy Ghost is the fulness of the divine love of Father and Son, produced by the action of Their reciprocal love. This completes the interior action of the Godhead; nothing more remains to be done, no other Person to be produced. There can be no more than the personified thought equal to the Godhead, and the personified love equal to the Godhead. Take care that the action of your will corresponds with your intelligence. You know God well. Do you love Him as well? Is your life as divine as your faith?

III. This mysterious productive action has no exact counterpart in creation. While the procession of the Second Person bears the specific name of *Generation* and its terms are Father and Son, we have to use the generic term *Procession* for the production of the Third Person, and the general term *Holy Spirit* for Him. The word *Spiration* is also used. There is an analogy between the eternal and temporal processions of the Divine Persons. The Son of God was born on earth and became the Son of the Holy Virgin; and He communicated the Holy Ghost by spiration or breathing on the Apostles, and sent Him on the day of Pentecost in the form of a mighty wind (spiritus) as well as of fiery tongues. The Apostle assures you that you are the temple of the Holy Ghost. How great are the privileges and honours heaped upon those who have submitted to the obedience of faith, who strive to live the life of God, and make use of the Holy Sacraments!

13.—THE PROCESSION OF THE HOLY GHOST.

I. The Divine Father begetting the Son, equal to Himself and the Image of His glory, by an act of the intellect, is simultaneously moved to exercise His will in an act of infinite love towards this reflection of His perfections. The Son in return necessarily loves the Father with an equal and infinite love. This joint action is within the Godhead; it is God; and it constitutes a production, and a term which has personal consciousness of that love, and which is the Holy Ghost. Thus the Third Person proceeds from the First and Second together as from one principle or source of action, for they are one in will and in love. The Father eternally begets the Son having the same divinity and the same powers as Himself, and amongst these is included an equal power with Himself of being the principle of the Holy Ghost. It is this fact of producing the Holy Ghost which is the source of the reciprocal relations between the Son and Holy Ghost: without these relations there would be no distinction and They would not be different persons. The production of the Holy Ghost is the great glory of the Son with the Father, as the generation of the Son is the great glory of the Father. The propension of the will towards the supreme good is the completion of our activity as spiritual beings. So love is the accomplishment of the law; so love covers a multitude of sins.

II. Love must be indeed great when induced in a being whose capacity is infinite, by an object which is infinitely worthy and productive of love. Such is the love of the Divine Persons. It is one simple uncompounded act, but we may consider it as including the different forms of love as known to us. 1. The love of appreciation, by which the Divine Persons esteem and value each other infinitely and

beyond everything, as being the Supreme Good. 2. The love of good-will, by which They desire each to the other all the praise, and joy, and glory which each merits, and which is contained in themselves. 3. The love of delight in each other, which is the highest kind of love, and the one most appropriate to God. This love was expressed by the Divine Father when He spoke from heaven concerning Our Lord and said, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. iii. 17). Exercise yourself towards each of the three Divine Persons in acts of love of each of these kinds. The love of delight is the source of spiritual joy, which is one of the fruits of the Holy Ghost. True religiousness is always joyful. Take care that this is the case with you. It will furnish an efficient test of your virtue.

III. The love in God which produces the Holy Ghost is a universal love of all that is good, so that it includes in itself God's love for His creatures. For the model and type of all goodness is some perfection existing in God; and therefore all creatures are present to the mind of God from all eternity, and are seen by Him with the internal act of intelligence of Himself that produces the Son. Corresponding to this is the act of the divine will, which loves all that is in the intellect of God, and therefore all that will be represented in creatures. This explains the infinite, the necessary, and yet the unexpected love which God manifests for all mankind in spite of their demerits. At their worst they still bear some trace of their high origin which they cannot efface. God not only loves all men and all things, but He loves them, therefore, in the Holy Ghost. You should love the Holy Ghost as the source of all the good gifts of God in the work of creation. He is the fount of graces of all kinds as described in the Veni Sancte Spiritus. He communicates to us charity, joy, peace, patience, faith, modesty, etc. He is indeed our Paraclete and Comforter. Too late have you known Him; too late have you loved Him!

14.—THREE SPECIALITIES OF THE HOLY GHOST.

I. It is a special peculiarity of the Holy Ghost that He is the bond of union between the Father and Son, Their harmony, Their peace, and Their love. This is the case inasmuch as the Father and Son become one principle in the production of the Holy Ghost; They have one and the same relation towards Him; and He has one single relation towards Them. This peculiarity does not belong, for instance, to the Father. He is not the bond of union between the Son and the Holy Ghost, because He stands in different relations towards Them; *viz.*, in the relation of generation towards the Son, and of spiration towards the Holy Ghost. In another way also the Holy Spirit is the bond of union, as being the personified propension, or inclination of the Father towards the Son, and of the Son towards the Father. He is the love of each for the other, and so binds the Blessed Trinity into a special union of Persons over and above the unity of their essence and nature. It is the peculiarity of love to unite different objects; and the Holy Ghost, as being eternal, uncreated, infinite Love, is the accomplishment of the most wonderful of unions. Beseech this Spirit of love to be the bond of union between you and the Godhead, and between you and all your brethren.

II. A second speciality of the Holy Ghost is that He is the final term of the internal processions of the Divine Persons. The Father is the First Person in the Godhead, the Holy Spirit is the last; the cycle is complete; and after that, no further procession is possible or conceivable. The Holy Ghost possesses in full, infinite measure the intelligence and will that belong to the Divine Essence; but these

do not produce another Person in the Godhead, for they have already exercised their infinite fecundity with infinite result in the production of the Son and Holy Ghost. The procession of the Third Person is the completion of the divine activity, its last term, its eternal repose and Sabbath. The ending of the productive action does not imply any deficiency or infirmity in the Holy Ghost. His perfection as a Person consists in the fact that He responds adequately to the infinite activity of the divine will and love. Thenceforth nothing more remains but the external operation of the Trinity in the production of creatures outside of Itself. Love, then, is the accomplishment of the law, even of the uncreated law of God's own being. This great faculty has been given to you for your perfection and happiness. Take care that it does not become corrupted into self-love, the parody and destruction of divine love.

III. The Divine Spirit of love is also a spirit of perfect sanctity. He is the sanctity of Father and Son; His presence is the sanctification of sinners. So effectual is divine love in us, that even in its lowest degree, and in our weak and frigid souls, it instantaneously destroys sin, and communicates to us the supernatural life of God and His actual presence. Therefore Our Lord said concerning St. Mary Magdalene, "Many sins are forgiven her because she hath loved much" (Luke vii. 14). How intense then must be the infinite sanctity resulting from the love of the three Divine Persons in the most Holy Trinity. This is the secret of holiness for you. Endeavour to cultivate a vivid and intense love for God, for the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Without this you cannot have constancy to keep those commandments of God which lead to life. Without this you cannot cast out the engrossing love of self and of creatures, or submit yourself to constant self-restraint, or find pleasure in spiritual things. Give your whole undivided love to God, and He will pour forth the abundance of sanctity and joy into your heart.

15.—JESUS CHRIST AND THE HOLY GHOST.

I. Jesus Christ, as man, was abundantly glorified by the Holy Ghost, who was poured out upon Him in infinite measure. Of old the Holy Spirit had inspired the prophets who foretold Our Lord's coming: He effected the mystery of the Incarnation in His chaste Spouse, the Blessed Virgin Mary; He guided the Sacred Humanity, as when He led Our Lord into the desert and descended on Him in the form of a dove. Jesus Christ declares part of the function of the Holy Ghost where He says, "He shall glorify Me" (John xvi. 14). And this the Holy Spirit does, demonstrating by miracles that Jesus is indeed the Son of God, and moving men by inspirations of grace to believe in Him. In return Our Lord glorified the Holy Ghost, revealing Him to mankind in the august mystery of the Holy Trinity, communicating Him to the Apostles and the Church, speaking of Him with profound respect, teaching men their duties towards the Spirit of God and the enormity of sinning against Him. You should imitate Our Lord in this. Contemplate the qualities of the Holy Ghost, the modes of His manifestations to us, the functions appropriated to Him in the external operations of the Trinity both in the natural and in the supernatural orders; and from all this conceive a special veneration and love for Him.

II. Proceeding to particulars, we find Our Lord applying terms of respect and titles of honour to the Holy Ghost. In the Old Testament He says: "Come over to Me, all ye that desire Me, and be filled with My fruits; for My spirit is sweet above honey" (Eccli. xxiv. 26, 27). To the woman of Samaria He speaks of the Holy Ghost as the "Gift of God," and says that this will be "a fountain of water

springing up unto life everlasting" (John iv. 10, 14). Again He tells the Apostles of the great effects which will be wrought by the Holy Spirit. "When the Paraclete cometh, whom I will send you from My Father, the Spirit of Truth who proceedeth from the Father, He will give testimony of Me" (John xv. 26). And instructing them as to their speech before their persecutors He says: "It is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you" (Matt. x. 20). Our Lord further magnifies the Holy Ghost above Himself, and values His honour even more than His own. "Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but he that shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him either in this world or in the world to come" (Matt. xii. 32). Be careful not to commit the dangerous sin of resisting the Holy Ghost, and His inspirations to action or suggestions of truth. Beware of self-will and obstinacy in sin, lest they lead you to final impenitence.

III. Our Lord further magnifies the Holy Ghost by sending Him on the Apostles and the Church to complete His own work of Redemption. He says that the Holy Ghost was necessary for their work, and they were not to venture to begin it until He endued them with His power from on high (Luke xxiv. 49). The Holy Ghost is the great treasure of the Church, His presence will confer upon it an indestructible life, and that presence will never be withdrawn. Our Lord seems to imply that the presence of the Holy Ghost is more to the Apostles than His own. "It is expedient for you that I go: for if I go not the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go I will send Him to you" (John xvi. 7). That which the Holy Ghost is to the Church, the same He is to you. In the words of the sacred liturgy He will be to you rest in labour, coolness in the heat, consoler in anguish, strength in conflict, sweetest refreshment, and most blessed light.

16.—THE EQUALITY OF THE DIVINE PERSONS.

I. The three Divine Persons are perfectly equal in all things inasmuch as They are perfectly one. The Divine Essence is not divided amongst Them, but They are of identically the same nature and the same substance. No one, and no two of Them, can be greater than another; nor can the three together possess more or do more than any one of Them. Even considering Them separately in Their personalities, with the differences of Their mutual relationships, there is still perfect equality between Them. The Sonship and the procession of the Third Person are as perfect and as necessary in the Divinity as the Paternity. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are eternally simultaneous constituents of the activity of the One Godhead within Itself. The reception of the Divine Essence is as infinite and noble as the communication of it. It is an equal dignity and glory to the Father to be without first principle or source, to the Son to be produced by the infinite Father, and to the Holy Ghost to be the termination and completeness of the divine action without producing another person. Take a comparison. A ray of bright sunlight was long supposed to be a unity only: now it is proved to be a trinity of three rays, each having a different colour and a different effect on vegetation. These act as one principle. They occur in a certain order, but one does not exist before the other nor apart from another. Each is equally sunlight, and is equally necessary to constitute the glowing unity of the sunbeam and to maintain life on earth. Attach great importance to right thinking about doctrines. But this requires right living and right worship. Each of this trinity is essential to make up the unity of full religiousness.

II. The three Persons are also equal in their attributes and powers: for these, though spoken of as separate

qualities, are but the one immovable, unchangeable, Divine Essence. The three Divine Persons have the same sovereign supremacy over all things, the same eternity, the same goodness and love and justice, the same knowledge and wisdom. Their actions, too, are inseparable. They have not made different worlds or originated different religions; all combined equally in creating all the universe, and in establishing the two dispensations of the Old and New Testament. What Our Lord said of Himself applies equally to the other Persons: "The Son cannot do anything of Himself but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doth, these the Son also doth in like manner" (John v. 19). So do you strive in all things to think and act with God. Do nothing without Him, still less in opposition to Him. So His likeness will be perfected in you until it grows into an intimate union.

III. The three Divine Persons are equal in Their right to the adoration, service and love of all creatures, on account of the equality in Their greatness and holiness, in Their love and Their operations towards us. What we worship in one we worship in all; what we see in one we see in all. It is true that the Second Person has brought Himself into closer relations with us by becoming man; and that His human life and virtues and His presence in the Blessed Sacrament appear rather to reveal the Second Person to us than the Father and the Holy Ghost, and rather to draw out our tenderness towards Him. But yet we must remember that the mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption is the joint work of the whole Trinity, only manifested differently on account of the relative differences of the Persons; and that the revelation of the one Person of Our Lord is the revelation of all, according to His words, "Philip, he that seeth Me seeth the Father also" (John xiv. 9). So when Our Lord comes to you He brings with Him the Father and the Holy Ghost. Love and worship each Person separately and all three in Their supreme unity.

17.—THE MUTUAL INDWELLING OF THE DIVINE PERSONS.

I. The three Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity, although differing as to personality, are inseparable as to the Essence or Substance of the Divinity, which is absolutely one in Them. So They are said to dwell with one another and in one another. St. John says: "The Word was with God," and "The only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father" (John i. 1, 18). In the same Gospel Our Lord says: "The Father who abideth in Me, He doth the works. Believe you not that I am in the Father and the Father in Me?" (John xiv. 10, 11). Therefore wherever the Father is, or the Son, or the Holy Ghost, there are also the other two Persons. The Divine Essence which is in the Father is fully in the Son and the Holy Ghost; for the Divinity, or the Divine Essence, is Father, Son and Holy Ghost. No one of the Persons can exist apart from the whole of the Divine Essence; nor apart, consequently, from the other Persons, who are fully in the Divine Essence. The personal relations and productions are not external but are immanent. The Father generates the Son, not as a separate entity, but by an intrinsic intellectual action within Himself; the Father and Son also produce the Holy Ghost by an interior action of mutual love, which is entirely within Themselves. This indwelling is called the circumincession. You are also substantially in God and God is substantially in you when you are in the state of grace; and the three Divine Persons are with you, as Our Lord promised: "If any one love Me . . . My Father will love him, and We will come to him and will make Our abode with him" (John xiv. 23).

II. The Persons of the Blessed Trinity also dwell in one another intellectually, by the fact that each has the fullest

perception, knowledge and consciousness of the others; or, as we may express it, they are inseparable in their thoughts. This mutual consciousness of one another may be called a communication of minds, or a divine conversation between the three Blessed Persons. There is nothing else like to this. Intellectual communication is imperfect, at its best, between different men. As between God and man, God bears us always and most completely in His mind; but our feeble, wandering, frivolous, sensual minds can only with great difficulty fix themselves for a short time on God. In the next life we shall have a much closer union of intelligence with God; we shall contemplate Him without distraction; we shall see all things in Him and in His knowledge of them; but yet we shall never see and understand Him as Father, Son and Holy Ghost do, in Their mutual indwelling. Aspire to this union now; it is necessary for the perfecting of man's intellectual life on earth.

III. There is also an inseparable indwelling of the Divine Persons on account of Their mutual love. Love is an attracting and uniting force. The soul is wrapped up, as we say, in that which it loves, and dwells in it by the delight felt in it. "Where thy treasure is, there is thy heart" (Matt. vi. 21). Each Divine Person perceives the infinite goodness, beauty and delight of the Godhead that exists in the others; and They are drawn together by a unifying attraction and love each for the other, such as would tend to make Them a unity if They were not already in the strictest sense such. Let nothing separate you from the love of God. This completes your union with Him in this life and in the next. The love of God is also the uniting force required by mankind for social harmony and progress. Other combining influences are not strong enough to resist the forces of isolation and disintegration. Even human love itself is transient though violent; it is little more than sensual and animal, unless refined, directed, and made permanent by resting on divine love.

18.—THE MISSION OF THE DIVINE PERSONS.

I. Our Lord several times spoke of His being *sent* by the Father, and of His *sending* the Holy Ghost into the world. This is called the external mission of the Divine Persons. It corresponds externally to the internal production of the Persons within the Godhead. It is the divine processions of the Trinity continued on the lower plane of the world of human souls, making the Divine Persons present in a new way with us, and producing in us an infusion of divine charity and various operations of grace. The Mission, then, consists of two elements, the eternal procession of a Divine Person and the temporal production of grace. As in the eternal processions there is a person producing and a person produced, so in the temporal mission there is a person sending and a person sent The Father proceeds from none, He therefore is sent by none. The Son proceeds from the Father, and so is sent by the Father. The Holy Ghost, who proceeds from Father and Son, is consequently sent by Father and Son jointly. As in the Trinity, so in the mission of the Divine Persons there is no separation of Person from Person, but They abide in one another, and all are bestowed when one is sent. Thus there is an unbroken chain of action binding all being together from God down to the smallest atom. There is a supreme infinite action in God which produces the Divine Persons. The reverberations of that action pass on into creation, and produce the Divine Persons in the souls of men. Their presence and Their grace lead to the production of virtuous acts in us; and we in turn act upon the lower creation.

II. There are two forms of the temporal mission of the Divine Persons; one is visible and one invisible. The send-

ing of God the Son as man into the world to preach, to labour, and to suffer visibly, was the first form of divine mission. Such also was the coming of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles in flames of fire. Generally, however, the grace of God works in secret; for "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation" (Luke xvii. 20). The Divine Persons come invisibly and softly into the soul to work in it Their powerful effects; according to the word of Job: "If He come to me I shall not see Him; if He depart I shall not understand" (Job ix. 11). This exercises our faith and humility. We possess God, and yet we cannot be puffed up by the certainty of possessing Him; we still have to work in fear and trembling; we walk by faith in God's word, and not with the assurance of sight. But while we fear, we have no reason for discouragement, but rather for trusting with blind confidence in God.

III. Wonderful must be the effects produced in the soul by such messengers as the Eternal Son and the Holy Ghost. These effects are not the effects of nature. When we speak of the divine missions we do not mean the operations carried on by the Divinity as head and source of the natural order of the world. The mission spoken of is that which is supernatural, and which makes God to be present with us in special and more than natural ways. The Divine Mission has as its object to produce sanctifying grace in our souls and increase it, to withdraw us from sin and eternal loss, to enable us to produce acts of virtue or render special services to God and His Church. You really receive at times a special influx and presence of the Divine Persons in your soul; you are aided by Them and act with Them and by Them. How splendid this is! But you need always to watch with anxiety lest the human spirit, or the spirit of the world, or even the spirit of Satan, should intrude itself into your mind and become the motive power of your actions. Humility, obedience, and the love of God will be your preservatives.

19.—THE DIVINE PERSONS AS GIVEN TO US.

I. The greatest wonder in the Divine temporal missions is that, not merely the grace and aid of God, but the Blessed Persons Themselves are given to us for our elevation and our comfort. Thus, in the Incarnation, the actual Person of God the Son, the Word of God, was bestowed on humanity, and became man and the Son of the Blessed Virgin. Further, our individual souls receive not only light in the intellect and ardour of love in the heart, but the Holy Spirit Himself personally. "The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us" (Rom. v. 5). "He that abideth in charity abideth in God and God in him" (1 John iv. 16). The supernatural likeness of God in us and our aspirations of love towards Him exercise such an attraction on the Divine Persons, that They become united with our souls, and cannot be separated from them except by mortal sin. They are present with souls that are in the state of grace, not simply by the immensity or ubiquity which causes Them to be in every place, but by a special personal indwelling, so that the human body becomes really the temple of the Holy Ghost, and of Christ and the Father too. Thus there dwell in you the Eternal Word produced by the infinite thought of God, and the Spirit produced by infinite love. How this surpasses all the gifts of the natural order, all bodily delights, all pleasures, dignities, sciences!

II. The Divine Persons are bestowed on us in different ways. 1. They come to us as the principle of the supernatural works done by us, works of virtue and of energy which are beyond our natural abilities. Without the divine presence we should be feeble, unspiritual, ungenerous, imprudent, unstable; with it we can believe all, do all, and suffer all things. 2. They are given to us as the object of our knowledge and our love, for the exercise of our intelligence and will. So we possess God as the object

which occupies our thoughts and our affections. 3. They are given also as the treasure and chief possession of the soul; so that in the midst of the tribulations and bitterness of life we find God within us, and there enjoy, within natural limits, the possession of the supreme good. This is what Our Lord promises us: "If any one love Me he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him" (John xiv. 23). In so many ways you are dependent on God; in so many ways He is useful to you, necessary to you Without Him you can do nothing. Be careful never to lose that divine presence.

III. It follows that when we commit mortal sin we lose, not only the favour of God, His love, and our title of children of God, but we actually lose God Himself. The personal presence of God is extinguished in our soul; God is driven forth. Our finite action has inflicted an infinite loss. God is present with us still by His immensity, as He is present in physical space and with the lower animals; He is also present by the grace which calls us to repentance; but He is no longer with us as the source of supernatural life, virtue, and merit, nor as the treasure of the soul and the object of its love. Further God is not with the sinner as the source of future glory. If then the sinner passes out of this life unrepentant, he begins his new stage of existence without God, and will never recover the possession of Him. It is a terrible punishment of crime to be deprived absolutely of one of the smaller gifts of God, light, or companionship, or freedom, or the minor comforts of life. How much worse it would be to lose all the sum of material gifts. The loss of supernatural gifts is much more terrible: and worse still is the loss of God, who is the totality of all that is good, desirable, beautiful. This is what mortal sin deprives us of. It is impossible to realize the full greatness of this calamity even with the help of faith; but your faith will suffice to save you from it.

20.—THE GLORY OF THE BLESSED TRINITY.

I. "There are three who give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost" (1 John v. 7). The Divine Persons give testimony to one another eternally. It is Their essential glory that each is thoroughly comprehended in all His infinite perfections by the other two Divine Persons, and is appreciated and valued accordingly, and is praised and glorified, therefore, to an adequate and infinite extent. Compared with this, all the appreciation and praise of creatures and glory from them is but as a grain in the balance. As God has wrought all His mighty operations in Himself, anteriorly to creation, and without the assistance of creatures; so the Divine Trinity glorifies Itself infinitely, within Itself, and has no need of us. Jesus Christ speaks to His heavenly Father of "the glory which I had, before the world was, with Thee" (John xvii. 5). And again: "I have glorified Thee on earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. And now glorify Thou Me, O Father, with Thyself" (John xvii. 4, 5). The glory given by the Divine Persons to one another in Their revelations and works on earth is but a faint presentation of the glory which They render to one another within the Divine Essence. Rejoice and praise God for the fact that He receives the full glory which is His due, that He does not depend upon man for it, and that our offences and blasphemies do not impair that infinite glory which is of His essence.

II. There is another praise and appreciation and glory rendered to the Blessed Trinity. This comes from the enormous hosts of the angelic spirits. It is a secondary, inferior and finite glorification, but it surpasses immeasurably all the glory of the service and praise that the whole of mankind could render. We read frequently of this in Holy

Scripture: "The morning stars praised Me together, and all the sons of God made a joyful melody" (Job xxxviii. 7). The prophet describes to us the Seraphim standing with veiled faces before the throne of the Most High: "and they cried out one to another and said, Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts, all the earth is full of His glory" (Isa. vi. 3). Again, at the birth of Our Lord there was "a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God, and saying: Glory to God in the highest" (Luke ii. 13, 14). St. John shows us how the hosts of heaven for ever give praise and honour and benediction to their Lord, prostrate before His throne, and never resting day or night (Apoc. iv. 8-11). When you see this world so full of iniquity, and refusing to accord to God the belief, the worship, the obedience, the love that He deserves, think of the still greater universe of spirits with all its rich endowments giving glory to God, without exception, without any alloy of infidelity, and without cessation.

III. Even this world renders much glory to the Holy Trinity. Apart from the manifestation of God in the natural order and the praise given to Him on that account, there is the supernatural glory rendered by the great sacrifice which, from age to age, is offered unceasingly from the rising to the setting of the sun, in the presence of millions of devout worshippers. There is the perpetual worship before the tabernacle of Jesus, going on in every Church throughout the world; and the recitation of the Divine Office day and night with its hymns, and psalms, and special versicles of praise at the end of each of them. And further, in this unfaithful and apostate world, there are many times over in every land the seven thousand who have not bowed their knee to Baal, but who have dedicated their whole being to glorifying God by copying His attributes in their lives. Your life must be one of two things; either you will join yourself with those named, in glorifying God, or you are necessarily on the side of Satan, engaged in dishonouring God and blaspheming His name.

MEDITATIONS ON CHRISTIAN DOGMA.

TREATISE III.

CREATION.

THE ANGELS.

1.—CREATION IN GENERAL.

I. God was under no obligation to create anything. It is only His intrinsic activity in producing the Persons of the Trinity that is necessary; all other action might or might not be, according to His will. God did not require the world or any creatures. He was rich in all good, perfectly happy, powerful, enjoying immovable repose and perfect activity in His own being. That which was, before creation, was not a dead solitude; but the three Divine Persons formed a kind of society in Their unity. There was a manifestation of infinite perfections by each to each, a mutual understanding and appreciation of the attributes of each, and action, proportioned to the greatness of the divine nature, rendering glory to each. No further witnesses were required of the divine glory, no audience for the celestial communications between the Persons. Indeed no created being could give and take, by the action of its intelligence and will, in anything like the same measure as do the Divine Persons. God has no need of you. You can do nothing that is of any use to Him. "I have said to the Lord, Thou art my God, for Thou hast no need of my goods" (Ps. xv. 2). When you have exerted all your talents and done all that you can, you may say with most perfect truth, "I am an unprofitable servant."

II. We, on the other hand, cannot do without God. So many million centuries ago, man, and the earth, and the whole universe were not. They were in an abyss of nothingness whence only the command of God was able to bring them forth. No creature could have drawn out a developed being from non-being, even if any creature had been pre-existent. The mode in which something is created from

nothing is absolutely inconceivable to us. Only a being of infinite intelligence and omnipotent power could do such a thing. A creature could not have acted before it existed so as to produce itself, or develop itself by its own energies. And the whole universe of things was as powerless to evolve itself as a single atom or a degree of force. What a vast difference between God and creatures! They were once in nothingness, He was always existent; they began a definite time ago, He had no beginning; they are dependent and imperfect, He is absolute uncontrolled Master, all powerful and all perfect. What an enormity it is, and how ridiculous, when any of God's creatures dare to deny His authority, and disobey His commands, and raise their heads in pride, and say "I will not serve!" This you do when you commit sin.

III. The number of the possible worlds and beings is absolutely without limit, which God might have made after the model of His ideas, and as reflections of His perfections. God determined on certain series of forces and substances, both in spirit and matter; and, by some incomprehensible projection of His infinite activity beyond Himself, He produced the commencements of force and motion and matter, endowed with enormous energies and latent powers of transformation and development. God thus inaugurated a new order. Outside of, or anterior to creation, God was the ocean of the supernatural only; at creation things were produced which had a thitherto unexampled relation to God. He became then the source and author of the natural order as well as of the supernatural, acting freely on two different planes, carrying out two different series of laws. Those two orders were separate and independent, till God united them in man as raised to the life of grace and participation with God. Admire God's wonderful dispositions. He unites the natural and supernatural orders as being the source of both; here below the two are united again in you.

2.—THE EXISTENCE OF THE ANGELS.

I. All creation is arranged in a regular sequence of stages. So much so, that science has on occasion asserted the existence of some species of animal that seemed needed to fill up a gap in the series: and that species has subsequently been discovered. Life is found everywhere, and in every conceivable form. Scientific men have observed that any form of life which is possible, considering the analogy of the rest of creation, is also probable. So we might have inferred the existence of angels if it had not been revealed to us. Tracing creation towards its source we come to more and more simple forms of life. Solid matter may be traced back to liquid and gas, and at last appears under forms of extreme tenuity. It is conjectured that the lightest of known substances, hydrogen, may be the primal form of matter out of which all the chemical elements have been made up. Then we arrive at immaterial, intangible forces, ether, heat, electricity, and the still more mysterious force of gravitation. As beings grow refined we find that they have a greater range, and greater power, and that they are able to pass through the substance of more solid beings. Analogy would lead us to surmise that there must be a still more refined class of existences, spiritual beings in fact, endowed with enormous powers. Adore in silence the marvellous possibilities of the power and wisdom of God.

II. In man we have what is manifestly the last term of material development on this earth. In him matter is raised above its natural level and associated with the nobler forces of mind and will. His further development is of necessity on the higher plane of the intellectual, the moral,

the social, the spiritual. This points to boundless possibilities, not only in the way of further human progress, but in regard to the existence of other classes of beings more perfect in mental and spiritual qualities, who begin where man leaves off, and carry on the chain of existence by more degrees than fill the interval between the jelly-fish and man. It is evident that the full height of created being is not attained in man. There is room yet for innumerable grades between him and God. The work of the Almighty would be justly considered as incomplete, as abruptly broken off and frustrate, if it ended in humanity as the summit of all creation. As reasoning compels science to assume certain things which can never be proved, such as the ether, atoms, gravitation, so would it force us, without other evidence, to conjecture the existence of such beings as angels. How wonderfully revelation completes our knowledge! How necessary is faith in addition to science!

III. The extraordinary abundance of life around us argues at least as great a variety and wealth of life in the boundless realm beyond our senses where the Almighty dwells. Comparing small with great, we feel that there must be courtiers and guards innumerable in the halls of the Eternal, and that they must be high beyond conception, in rank, in energies, in duties, in splendour of endowments. There are ministries for such beings as well as for us. God's works are not limited to the range of our experience or even of our imagination. His attributes require a much greater space for their manifestation than is afforded by the whole of the visible universe. God has therefore, as the Scripture tells us, made a whole universe of noble spirits to stand before Him, and minister to Him in duties far superior to ours. Great as you are in the material creation, you are weak and miserable compared with the higher world. Strive to raise yourself to it; above all do not fall lower than your already lowly position.

3.—THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE ANGELS.

I. Each ascending class of beings begins, in its highest specimens, to assume the characteristics of the class next above it; and so might serve, if need were, to indicate the peculiarities of the next higher group of creatures. Man, the last and most perfect in the line of material beings, is much more than mere matter. There is in him a higher element, not compounded of chemical substances or the subtle forces of matter. This enjoys faculties not belonging to other beings—intellect and will; it has an apprehension of moral goodness, of the true, of the beautiful; it has cravings, sometimes half unconscious, for something higher than this universe and more enduring. Above all there is in mankind an ineradicable tendency towards the supernatural, towards God and religion; and this is for ever asserting itself in various forms as one of the most energetic forces in human nature. All this is an indication of an actual higher state; for no impulsion exists in the universe without its corresponding object or cause. It is further an indication of a higher class of beings, endowed with more perfect spirituality, less encumbered by matter, more free in the exercise of mind and will, standing nearer to the throne of the Almighty Ruler. Progress is the law of being. Everything points upward through a higher class to God. Cultivate, not those appetites which you share with the beasts, but those aspirations which raise you towards the angels.

II. The spirituality of the angels is much more perfect than that of men. We are not pure spirits, but a compound of the spiritual with the material. The soul has a natural and permanent affinity for those atoms of the slime of the earth which constitute the body; just as oxygen tends to enter into combination with all the coarser elements. Further, the soul is too often enslaved by the prepotent influence of the body, and is dragged down by it to the

material level, instead of raising it to spiritual heights. Hence the finer element in man is often submerged under the rush of the body's coarser interests and appetites and pleasures, and falls from its high estate into degradation. The angels are free from all such influences. Being without bodies they have nothing to drag them down from their proper level; they are not drawn two ways at once by opposing forces; there is no veil to obscure their direct vision of God's face; there is no deception to make error look like truth; there is nothing to tarnish their purity and sanctity. This spiritual life is to be yours one day. All other creatures, even our material frames, having run their course return whence they came—living beings into dead matter, compounds into their primary elements. The soul of man alone remains, and, united to a spiritualized body, it rises to a higher existence. But to fit ourselves for this our life on earth must be spiritualized.

III. The spirituality of the angels is, however, infinitely inferior to that of God, while generally resembling it. So perfect and transcendent is God that, as compared with Him, the substance of the angels is coarse, and, as it were, material. They are still but a dim and imperfect reflection of the unparalleled brightness and purity of the Divine Essence. So does a light, which in the darkness is a brilliant illumination, grow pale and invisible in the full glare of the noon-tide. "Behold among His saints none is unchangeable, and the heavens are not pure in His sight. Behold even the moon doth not shine, and the stars are not pure in His sight. How much less man that is rottenness, and the son of man who is a worm?" (Job xv. 15; xxv. 5, 6). You are the lowest of all spiritual beings, the feeblest of all that possess intellect and heart. If you are so poor as compared with the angels, how inferior you are before the unapproachable spirituality of God. Humble yourself before Him that you may be found worthy to be raised to His kingdom.

4.—THE NUMBERS AND ORDERS OF THE ANGELS.

I. "In the multitude of people is the dignity of the king" (Prov. xiv. 28). God's magnificence is shown by the enormous multitude of the works of His hand. Consider the thousand millions of men actually living on this planet, and the uncounted numbers who have lived or have yet to live. Consider the teeming abundance of animal, plant, and insect life. Look up to heaven, and remember that God alone "telleth the number of the stars and calleth them by their names" (Ps. cxlvi. 4). The fixed stars, or suns, are perhaps as numerous as the whole number of living men on earth; each of these is surrounded by its attendant planets and satellites; and each of these is perhaps as full of life as our globe. And yet this is only the outer court of God's palace Heaven itself, the special realm of God's magnificence, must exceed the universe in the multitude of its inhabitants as it does in splendour. A momentary glimpse of the heavenly vision was granted to the prophet, and he tells us that about the throne of God "thousands of thousands ministered to Him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before Him" (Dan. vii. 10). We are impressed, or at times overwhelmed, by the strange influence that emanates from a great crowd, in the streets of a city or in the ranks of an army. How wonderful the effect of the mere numbers of that spiritual world that surrounds the throne of God! How thrilling the moment of your entrance among them!

II. This world, as we know it, is distinguished also by the immense variety of the different kinds and forms of beauty, and grandeur, and ingenuity, and utility. The representation of the multitudinous perfections of God has to be carried out by innumerable classes of creatures as well as by innumerable examples of each. This must be the case in the angelic world, as it is here. Among those blessed spirits

there may well be differences in the character of their intelligence or love, and in the functions of their service, much more varied than the species of living creatures on earth, or the countless forms assumed by dead matter. What these may be we are unable to picture to ourselves. Our ideas are limited by the narrow surroundings in which we live. From revelation and the sense of the Church we may gather a few indications as to the classification and the functions of the heavenly spirits. The exploration and investigation of this mere corner of the world in which we live is more than enough to furnish occupation for millions of men during thousands of years. What will it be when we are admitted to the full knowledge of the whole abundance of the future world! Prepare for it now. Let the science of nature lead you to the science of God; and do not dwell so exclusively on the lowest of God's wonders as to forget the existence of the higher ones.

III. Ancient speculation on Holy Scripture deduced therefrom the notion of a certain order among the angels, and this has obtained general currency in the Church. This classification bears the impress of the Holy Trinity. There are three hierarchies among the angels, and each of these consists of three choirs. These are the Seraphim, Cherubim and Thrones; the Dominations, Powers and Virtues; the Principalities, Archangels and Angels. The tradition of these nine choirs was also current among the Jews from the remotest times. These hierarchies constitute three great empires of spiritual beings, each divided into three kingdoms or provinces, and perhaps each of these again into countless classes of spirits. All these gradually rise in perfection and beauty as they approach more nearly to the throne of God. We have reason to believe that some saints have been placed among the highest angels for their love and their labours on earth. Is your devotion such as to entitle you to rank with any class of the angels?

5.—THE INTELLIGENCE OF THE ANGELS.

I. The angels, being pure spirits, have an activity that is spiritual; their first faculty therefore is that of the understanding. As they are so much superior by nature to men, so is their intelligence more acute and their knowledge more extensive. The first and chief object of their knowledge is the supreme truth, God, and the truths of the divine sphere of existence. They live in the immediate presence of God, they see Him clearly, face to face, and they penetrate more thoroughly than we can at present into the understanding of His attributes, His power, His works. Seeing God, they see all things in Him. The image and model of all things is reflected in the consciousness of God; all events past, present, future, are for ever present to the thought of God. The beatific vision of God is found in the immediate communication of the created mind with the divine mind; the vision of divine truths thus made manifest involves the vision of created truths; so are all things seen in God by the heavenly spirits, whether angels or human souls. The angels thus have a knowledge of created things, of the course of events, of the secrets of nature, which is far superior to that of men; they can anticipate the contingent future more surely than we, and can even foresee some future free acts of men by the permission and assistance of God. Endeavour to lead the life of the angels on earth, and you will acquire an insight into the things of God beyond what study can communicate. This will furnish you with practical guidance for the conduct of life, and promote your happiness more than any mundane attainments.

II. Angelic intelligence surpasses the human, not only in knowing more, but in the manner of acquiring and holding knowledge. 1. We gather our knowledge of things by

our contact with them through our senses: the angels see things in their cause, in God, with all their relations to environment. 2. We learn by long application to study and trains of reasoning, by slow degrees and with much labour: the angels see at a glance, intuitively, all that they wish to know. 3. We spend much of our time in unconsciousness. The material medium through which our intelligence works grows weary and ultimately wears out. The angelic mind is for ever in a state of unwearied activity. 4. The angel sees things in their dependence on God, sees God reflected and expressed in them, and glorifies God by this knowledge: we see creatures or self apart from God, not understanding their relations to God, to His laws, to our happiness; and we often turn our knowledge to our own hurt. Look at all things with the eye of faith and religion, and you will read in them a significance which is hidden from the worldly and unbelieving.

III. The fallen angels retain their natural faculties, powers of intellect, and wide knowledge; but they use these great gifts to raise themselves up in arrogance against Him who is the source of all truth. As St. Paul says: "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth" (1 Cor. viii. 1). St. Augustine likens that science of men which is without the grace and charity of God to the science of the devils and the reprobate. St. Bernard compares it to meats which cannot be digested for want of the proper secretions, and which afflict the body instead of nourishing it. The good angels enjoy their knowledge in dependence on God, and pay Him the homage of humility on account of their own advantages and greatness. The knowledge and love of God is more precious to them than all their natural powers or command over created science. Value knowledge most highly, but value the grace of God infinitely more. Knowledge accompanied by depravity is like a poisoned sword in the hand of a madman. It does more harm even than ignorance.

6.—THINGS UNKNOWN TO THE ANGELS.

I. God alone is omniscient. Every creature is finite, and feels this in its intelligence; so the knowledge of the angels, extensive as it is, is subject to limitations. God alone, for instance, holds the wonderful power of reading futurity. His future acts, and the future acts of the liberty of man are known to Him alone. Our Lord tells us that the date of the day of judgment is unknown even to the angels in heaven; many other things must also be hidden from them, including probably the ultimate destiny of individual men. So far as they know such things, we must suppose that they are revealed to them specially by God, when the knowledge is necessary for our utility and for their service. It is surmised that after their creation and before their trial they did not fully know what the result would be in the way of reward or punishment. As to affairs on earth their natural powers would often enable them to conjecture truly as to future events, proceeding as men do from past experience and the knowledge of antecedent causes. We may safely assume that the bad angels would be less likely to receive any knowledge of the future from God, and they could only form a judgment about it from their observation of natural laws. Do not be astonished that God has imposed limitations on your knowledge and curiosity. Accept them humbly, and do not be so arrogant as to suppose that you ought to share with God in His omniscience.

II. The angels cannot read the secrets of our hearts, and still less can the evil spirits do so. They may indeed discover them, as our fellow-men do, by the indications which we give either consciously or unconsciously, but not otherwise. God has given us complete mastery over our wills

and thoughts. He alone, the absolute Lord of all, has the power and right to penetrate into the secret recesses of our interior: according to the words, "Thou alone knowest the hearts of the children of men" (2 Par. vi. 30). If we keep our determinations strictly to ourselves, no one is able to intrude within our domain. The knowledge of thoughts, like the knowledge of the future, is peculiarly the sign of divine power. As God has allowed no other but Himself to penetrate into the domain of your thoughts, you in like manner should exercise your dominion by preventing any other from ruling there but God. He has made it your sanctuary; do you make it also His.

III. The angels are further unable fully to sound the deeps of the perfections of God and His great mysteries. Even to them His judgments are incomprehensible and His ways unsearchable; and no one but the Spirit of God knoweth the things of God (Rom. xi. 33; 1 Cor. ii. 11). The angelic intelligence, vast as it is, is, still, as incapable as ours of taking in infinity; and it is no more than a small mirror held up to reflect the whole expanse of the heavens. It may be that the whole of the revelation made to man was not known beforehand to the angels, and that they only learnt of certain of the mysteries of God when they were made known by Our Lord Jesus Christ. From Scripture we learn that at least the evil spirits did not know of the Divinity of Jesus, inasmuch as they tempted Him so as to ascertain in what sense He was the Son of God. There remains much for the good angels yet to learn concerning the infinite abysses of wonder in the Divinity. For them, as for us, there is an inexhaustible store from which they will be satiated in ever-increasing measure for all eternity. Life for them and for us will be an unending progress in new activities and new attainments of intellect and will. You have to open that path of progress while living here. Sin stunts and destroys your spiritual activities, and cuts you off from future progress.

7.—THE WILL AND LOVE IN THE ANGELS.

I. The angels, having intelligence or knowledge of truth and goodness, have necessarily the correlative power of the will by which they choose and adhere to that which is good. There are four ways in which things gravitate towards that which suits their nature and their wants. 1. Dead matter is moved by external compulsion without having any source of motion in itself. The stone is drawn downwards by the force of the earth's attraction. 2. Organized beings without consciousness are moved by certain molecular changes in their substance. So the flower opens to the sun, and the roots of a tree travel underground towards water. 3. Animals perceive what they want by their senses, and blind instinct makes them seek the gratification. 4. Intelligent beings perceive by the senses and the mind, they reason and deliberate, choose or reject, take measures to carry out their determination, adhere to it and delight in it. The angels possess this power of free-will, as do men, but in a more perfect manner. Their intelligence is not obscured, partially enlightened and partially blinded like ours; their will, in proportion, is deliberate in its motions and firm in its determination. They know clearly, resolve firmly, and abide for ever by their decision. You too have this great power; it is not perfect in you; it needs to be carefully cultivated. You can increase its force and its propension to good. You can neglect it till it becomes impotent. You then fall under the dominion of the primary bodily appetites: you reject the restraining influence of grace: reason alone does not suffice as a check: you have not the restraint of instinct like the animals: and your perverted will carries you headlong to destruction.

II. The angelic will has an innate propension towards

God. God is the supreme good, and is supremely desirable and lovable when He is known, as He was known and recognized by the angelic intelligence. As was Lucifer at the first, so each angel was "full of wisdom and perfect in beauty." The prophet might have said of each, "Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day of thy creation, until iniquity was found in thee" (Ez. xxviii. 12, 15). The angelic nature, unlike ours, had not received any perversion or inherited tendency towards depravity: it was in each one apt and fitted for its destiny, union with God by intelligence and love. The angels could fully appreciate the delights and the sweetness that are in God, and the enormity of the sin committed by transferring their love to self or creatures. Therefore the sin of the angels was more deliberate and less excusable than ours. Therefore God gives us peculiar opportunities of renewing ourselves by penance. So we have good compensation for all our sad inheritance of ignorance and sinfulness.

III. The love of God involves the love of creatures made by Him in His image; and the second precept of charity follows close on the first. So the angels have a natural tendency to love and communicate good, one to another. Their intercourse is marked by perfect peace and harmony, by perfect love for all others, by delight in their advantages, by happiness in their company. It is believed that there are offices of charity amongst them, consisting in the communication of illumination and enjoyment from the higher to the lower choirs; God making use of all the angels, as He does men on earth, to be His instruments, and the channels of truth and grace, and representations of His perfections towards others. So amongst them there is love of superiors without jealousy, of equals without a spirit of rivalry, of inferiors without contempt or condescension. You will not be fit for the kingdom of love unless you have practised it here. If your neighbour does not deserve love for himself, love him for the sake of God.

8.—THE MOVEMENTS OF THE ANGELS.

I. Some of the heavenly spirits have the special function of being the messengers of God. This is signified by the word *Angel*, and Scripture tells us of their being *sent* to execute the decrees of God and to convey revelations and graces to men. Jacob saw them in vision ascending and descending constantly between heaven and earth. They are spoken of in Scripture as having wings, and so we represent them in pictures: this figure represents to us the instantaneous promptitude with which they obey the commands of God. In a sense we may say that the angels move from place to place, and we may speak of the rapidity of their flight. But this is speaking according to the material conditions of our lives. In reality the angels are not subject to the laws of space and to the three dimensions of length, breadth and thickness. They do not pass through intervening spaces, nor, strictly, do they pass from place to place. They become present here or there by acting or appearing in such a place or places. As forces are more immaterial they move with greater velocity. Sound is rapid; light, electricity and nerve impulsions are much more so; gravitation acts instantaneously, it has no rate, and cannot be said to travel between two bodies. The angels are much more immaterial. Learn hence to be prompt in acting on the inspirations of grace. When God makes known His will, it must be carried out at once, whatever the cost. If you attempt to choose your own time He may withdraw from you His inspiration, or the grace or strength or opportunity to carry it out.

II. The angels do not possess immensity, like God; they are not present simultaneously in several places. Each one

has a finite action, which cannot, like the action of God, operate everywhere at once. An angel acts or speaks in a definite place, like those so often mentioned in Holy Writ; he is therefore in a certain place rather than in another, although he has no extension which can be measured as space. We may compare an angel to a human soul. The soul is in the body and not elsewhere; it is in every part of the body, and yet, although the body has dimensions, the soul has not. In some sense an angel moves from place to place, inasmuch as he acts now in one place and now in another. More we cannot say, as our mind and language are only adapted to the conditions of space and its dimensions. Endeavour to keep your soul on a higher spiritual level even though you have to live on the material plane. Keep it removed as far as possible above the ordinary conditions of sensual, worldly, selfish, sinful life.

III. It appears likely that the functions of the angels as ministers of God's will on earth, include some amount of physical power over material things. Thus an angel conveyed Habacuc from Judea to Daniel in the lions' den; Satan also transported Our Lord to the pinnacle of the temple. Angels slew the first-born in Egypt, destroyed the army of Sennacherib, and scourged Heliodorus when he intruded into the temple. It is the way of God's Providence to carry out His designs through created agencies, through the powers of nature or human energies. No being is useless, or without its special function in carrying on the life and motion of the universe. By analogy those mighty spirits of God must have their uses, and duties proportioned to their great powers. We know that they help us, even in our physical necessities. What else they do we know not; but we can place no limit to the possibilities of their action whether in the spiritual or the material sphere. Lead a life of holiness and prayer like that of the angels, and God will give you great powers and great duties; even material nature will be in some sense subject to you.

9.—THE CREATION OF THE ANGELS.

I. The angels were created by God *in the beginning*. They were not from all eternity; they could not be, for none is eternal except the One Infinite, *i.e.* God. They were created therefore, and they had a beginning. We know that their creation took place before the sin of Adam, for it was a fallen angel that tempted him. Whether they were created in time, or outside of time and in eternity, we cannot say; nor whether their creation was an instantaneous act of God or extended through successive periods; nor whether these periods were moments or numberless millions of years. All we can do is to bear in mind, without drawing any inferences, the enormous magnitude of the scale on which God carried out those works which we have been able to investigate. It may be, as some have thought, that the celestial spirits are a component part of the cosmic system, created contemporaneously with it, more or less, and exercising functions connected with it. Others think of them rather as belonging to a higher order, supramundane or supernatural; as being of a different creation, the products of an anterior and generically distinct creative impulse emanating from the Divinity; as constituting in fact another universe of being, and only connected with this of ours by the duties assigned to some as messenger and guardian angels, and by the junction effected with us in our elevation to their supernatural plane. So, the creation of the angels would be intermediate in order and character between the infinite productive activity of God within His own being, and the external material production of our universe. Here are wondrous treasures of science, impenetrable to us now, but reserved for our knowledge in the kingdom of God.

II. Scripture gives us to understand that the angels were created in heaven. This *heaven* may be simply the supra-

mundane state outside the domain of time and space; or it may imply a sort of preliminary admission to the antechamber, so to speak, of the Divine Presence. They are supposed to have been created in the state of supernatural grace, with some degree of knowledge of God and communication with Him, but not such as would amount to the Beatific Vision and their final perfection. This last constitutes the state of reward and confirmation in grace, and is incompatible with the state of trial and its possibilities of failure. The angels, then, although not perfectly possessed of heaven, were in the supramundane world, they were in that sphere where their duties lay, and with grace they possessed the first stage of the heavenly life. You are in a similar state; you have grace and divine charity; you can enter into corporal union with Our Lord in the Holy Sacrament; the Church, to which you belong, is called in the Gospel "the Kingdom of Heaven." Praise God for this.

III. The angels were created for the service of God, and for glory and happiness in His presence. God made them naturally adapted for this end, and for grace and sanctification, by the use of which they might merit the Beatific Vision. He gave them a great variety of endowments and powers, so that they might, by their activities, represent the divine attributes and glorify them. He also made them in vast numbers, so as to increase by multiplication the exhibition of His perfections. From the depths of His eternity God had desired to communicate happiness and glory to the angels; He devised such a trial and such means as would most conduce to that object; He foresaw the different results, and selected His own from among them for their rewards and glory. The greatness of God and His goodness merit that He should be adored and glorified by innumerable creatures; and this service rendered to Him constitutes their perfection and happiness. You have been made for this noble object. Take care not to fall short of it. Every negligence towards God is so much loss to yourself.

10.—THE GENERAL ENDOWMENTS OF THE ANGELS.

I. The Old Testament speaks of Lucifer under the figure of the King of Tyre, and makes known to us something of the first state of the angels. "Thou wast the seal of resemblance, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. Thou wast in the pleasures of the paradise of God. . . . Thou wast a cherub stretched out and protecting, and I set thee in the holy mountain of God. Every precious stone was thy covering. . . . Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day of thy creation, until iniquity was found in thee" (Ez. xxviii. 12-15). It may be reasonably presumed that the case of Adam was parallel to that of the angels; and God created him in grace, spoke with him familiarly, and communicated to him both natural and divine knowledge. Hence has arisen the opinion prevalent in the Church and supported by the Fathers, that the angels were not created in an imperfect state, and on a lower level than the one they were destined to occupy; but that they were from the first placed on the supernatural level, clothed with sanctifying grace, and adorned with the infused habits of faith, hope, charity, and the other virtues required of them. How magnificent is the generosity of God to His rational creatures! It is far beyond the lavishness with which, as we know, He endows the material creation. It is beyond all our claims and desires. He so equips us for our career that we cannot fail except by the fault of our own malice.

II. The graces bestowed on the angels must have comprised the illumination of their primary faculty, the intellect, by the revelation of great truths and mysteries. St. Augustine thinks they can never have been in a state comparable to darkness or ignorance, but must have been from the first as full of the light of knowledge as they were of sanctifying

grace. What that revelation consisted of we cannot know; probably it was much more than has ever been made known to men by the light of faith, but not amounting as yet to the Beatific Vision. They must have known much of the greatness and goodness of God, of their duties of love and obedience towards Him, of the future designs of His Providence, of His rewards and punishments. We may suppose that among these things were the mysteries that have been revealed to us, the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Creation of the world. The illumination of your intellect with divine truth is the chief foundation of your spiritual life and salvation. God has accorded this to you. He has not left you to be carried about by every wind of doctrine, but has given you a fixed certainty. It is one of the most precious of His gifts. Return Him thanks for it.

III. The Creator also must have given the angels the graces which belong to the will and which move it to action; and thus they were able from the first to co-operate with God's action, to elicit acts of various virtues, and to merit an increase of the divine communications. Their first impulse would necessarily be one of movement towards God; for the essential qualities of a being assert themselves spontaneously, the voice of nature always makes itself heard, and the faculties seek for that object which they are made to exercise themselves upon. This impulse was an attraction and not a compulsion; for, as rational beings, the angels were free, and so were able to conform themselves or not to the law of their being. As Adam loved and served God before the trial and rebellion and fall, so it is possible that even the angels who afterwards revolted may have aspired to God supernaturally before the trial was proposed to them. The good angels corresponded to grace from the first and persevered to the end. Be faithful to every call or grace from God. One step leads on to another. A small initial divergency from the straight line may continue till it becomes a gulf over which no man can pass.

11.—THE SPECIAL ENDOWMENTS OF THE ANGELS.

I. "Star differeth from star in glory" (1 Cor. xv. 41). There are differences between the heavenly spirits; they have received various kinds and various degrees of grace from God. Amongst them, no doubt, as amongst men, their Lord has singled out some for special favour and for higher place. To some He has assigned a peculiar vocation, and duties which require greater capacities and graces. Some, possibly, like some of us, have responded with greater ardour, generosity and love to the advances of God, or may have used their opportunities to better effect than others. To all this must correspond a more abundant outpouring of divine favour. Moreover, the angels are arranged in different orders and choirs, and this involves differences of dignity, activity and glory. Your present sanctity and future reward depend partially on the free generosity of the Almighty, partially on the task and position assigned to you here, partially on your own efforts and fidelity to grace. Be content with God's arrangements for you, and strive to do the best with such graces as you have. The last often becomes first; the humblest and the least endowed have risen to high spiritual perfection and glory, above those who seemed to be the wise and the strong according to nature and even according to grace.

II. With their difference of vocation and difference in correspondence to grace, the angels are also distinguished by a different perfection of virtue. The ardour of the Seraphim, the knowledge of the Cherubim, the submission of the Thrones, the other virtues of the blessed choirs, these are peculiarities special to each, which constitute their particular service towards God. So it is among the Saints.

Each has his own character of holiness. Noah is noted for perseverance, Abraham for faith, Job for patience, Joseph for chastity, Moses for meekness, David for fervent devotion; and, in the Christian Church, St. Francis of Assisi for poverty, St. Peter of Alcantara for austerity, St. Ephrem for holy fear, St. Francis of Sales for sweetness, St. Thomas Aquinas for learning, St. Vincent of Paul for organized charity. So it should be with you. There is some form of usefulness in the service of God and man for which you have a special facility. There is some attribute of God or aspect of the life of Jesus which you have to manifest as your contribution towards the total exhibition of God in mankind. There is some particular virtue which God wishes to dominate your life. Pray to know what it is, and to have grace to fulfil your destiny.

III. It is to be remembered that each angel, although excelling in a particular virtue, possesses all others, and is not deficient in any one. Every possible virtue and excellence is common to them all. A perfection which is distinctive of one choir by its special brilliance is not therefore absent from other angels; nor is its possession by one angel a cloak or excuse for the want of other perfections in him. Your special virtue must not be your only one; your principal duty must not make you forget minor ones. Do not rely on any good work of yours, however meritorious, but remember that you have many great deficiencies known not to you but to your friends and enemies. Do not trust to one virtue as making you completely just, but fear lest by the violation of one commandment you make yourself guilty of all. You may, however, practise one virtue especially, and this will bring in the others and co-ordinate them round itself. This virtue may become the key-note of your spiritual life, tuning all the others into harmony, and giving them a special character. But it has an opposite pole, your predominant passion, which may easily become a key-note of evil and a source of other sins. Beware of it.

12.—THE FIRST HIERARCHY.

I. An ancient work formerly attributed to St. Denis the Areopagite sums up the ancient Jewish and Christian traditions concerning the different orders of the angels and the characteristics of each. The author gathers from Holy Writ, and principally from St. Paul's Epistles, the names of nine choirs, and arranges them in three greater divisions or hierarchies according to their dignity. The first hierarchy comprises those spirits who are devoted to the immediate service of God, and stand, comparatively speaking, within the veil. The highest of the three choirs is that of the Seraphim. Their characteristic is the intense and burning love which they render to Him who is the source of all love, and is Himself infinite Love. They are the created representation of that high divine perfection; and in that consists their service and glorification of God. This keeps them for ever in the adorable Presence, worshipping, and crying one to another, "Holy! Holy! Holy! the Lord God of Hosts" (Isa. vi. 3). The love of God is the final service of Him, the most worthy of Him, the most perfect offering of yourself to Him. It is the completion and crown of the other departments of our service, and at the same time is the summary of them all. God sums up all His perfections for us in His love; and He desires above all things our love in return. Join yourself with the Seraphim, and ask them to bring a burning coal from the celestial altar to enkindle your frozen heart.

II. The Cherubim are the second choir. God is the sole object of their service, and they too stand for ever round His throne. We attribute to them a deep knowledge and science of God; it is accompanied indeed by an intense love, but this is subsidiary to the activity of their intelligence.

Their characteristic is to reflect the infinite wisdom, to be representatives of the action of the divine intellect, to glorify it thereby, and to praise it. On account of their all-penetrating vision of the Divine Essence, they are represented by the prophet as being full of eyes, their bodies, and their necks, and their hands, and their wings (Ez. x. 12). They see and understand the beauty of God, and are the means of communicating this knowledge to the inferior choirs of the blessed spirits. The knowledge of God is perfect justice (Wisd. xv. 3). It is a great and lofty service of Him to think of His presence, meditate on His attributes, and seek out in His works the evidences of His power, and wisdom, and love. No science on earth is so wonderful, so beautiful, so satisfying to the soul. Value it beyond all.

III. The third choir in the hierarchy that immediately surrounds the majesty of God is that of the Thrones. God is a spirit, universally present, not limited to any spot; His throne, His presence chamber, His courts, can only be spoken of in a figurative way; we speak of such things to indicate, not really to describe, that which is ineffable. By the Thrones we mean a choir of spirits upon whom the divine Majesty, in some spiritual sense, rests and reposes. Isaias speaks of the throne of God being high and elevated, and of the temple being filled by those which were beneath Him (Isa. vi. 1. Vulgate). The virtue attributed to these spirits is a profound submission by which they recognize the supreme authority of God and exhibit it to others. Amongst men the throne of an earthly monarch is the symbol of his authority and even of his person, and itself receives honour on account of him whom it represents. You may become like to these spiritual Thrones by your submission to the will and pleasure of God, as made known either in Him or in His representatives. God will then rest and repose upon that throne with glory to Himself and with honour to you. Humble yourself thus, and He will make you truly great.

13.—THE SECOND HIERARCHY.

I. The three choirs of the second hierarchy are, according to St. Dionysius, associated with the external rule of God over creatures. The Dominations are the first of these. They represent the universal sovereignty of the Creator over all things, they manifest that perfection, assert it, and promote it. The petition of the Our Father, "Thy kingdom come," expresses the object of their existence. The special virtues of these angels are, therefore, profound adoration towards the majesty of God, zeal for the maintenance of His authority, hostility to all those numerous forms of usurpation by which the devil, or the world, or the flesh, thrust themselves into the place of God as supreme objects of human homage and service. You require the spirit of these holy Dominations in yourself, and their aid in your work for God. A contest is always in progress between the two standards of Christ and Satan. A large portion of mankind have adopted, more or less consciously, the spirit of him who said "I will not serve," and have cast off the yoke which is sweet and the burthen which is light. The honourable service of God is the only true liberty. Those who cast it off only change masters, and they become the bond-slaves of evil, of misery, and of Satan. As far as you can, promote the reign of God in yourself and others.

II. The second choir is that of the Virtues. The meaning of the word in this connexion is rather that of Scripture than of common parlance. It does not mean moral excellences such as patience, faith, etc., but the strength, energy and overwhelming force of God. So the frequent expression of the Psalms "Dominus Deus *Virtutum*" is rendered "the Lord God of Hosts." In the New Testament we read, "the power

(virtus) of the Lord was to heal them" (Luke v. 17). The function of these spirits is to represent that perfection of God which "reacheth from end to end mightily" (Wisd. viii. 1), and compels all things to His will. This is that power of God which produces miraculous effects in the realms of matter and of mind. It may well be supposed that God entrusts to this choir of spirits the execution of His great works of power, and the duty of aiding others who are so engaged. The moral virtue that corresponds is Fortitude; it is the quality of Apostles and Martyrs, of mighty workers and sufferers. You need the aid of this blessed choir; you are so subject to weakness, discouragement, cowardice. "The scourge is come upon thee and thou faintest, it hath touched thee and thou art troubled. Where is thy fear, thy fortitude, thy patience, and the perfection of thy ways?" (Job iv. 5, 6). Only in the power of thy God.

III. The Powers represent that second aspect of the might of the Lord by which "He ordereth all things sweetly" (Wisd. viii. 1). This is a force in which there is no feverish exertion or abusive excess of power. The peculiarity of this choir is expressed in the Beatitude: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land" (Matt. v. 4). It is exhibited notably in the Church, which is always oppressed and always victorious; which does not take the sword of the flesh for her defence, and therefore cannot perish by the sword; and which finds that the blood of her martyrs is the seed of abounding harvests. In accordance with this, when the power of the Almighty was manifested to Elias, it was not in the great strong wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, "but in the sound of gentle stillness" (3 Kings xix. 12 Hebr.). To these angels is also attributed a special power against Satan and his hosts. Do not attach too much importance to mere natural vigour of character, to a restless animal activity, to excitement and enthusiasm in good works. Quiet effort united with prayer is the most efficient and lasting force.

14.—THE THIRD HIERARCHY.

I. The spirits of the third hierarchy are considered as entrusted by God with what we may call executive powers. They act upon the external world more directly than the other orders, and, as we gather from Holy Scripture, act as guides, directors, messengers, in carrying out the divine decrees regarding this world. The first of these three choirs is that of the Principalities. We assign to this class such spirits as the one whom the Prophet Daniel calls the "Prince of the Kingdom of the Persians." These are the angels who have the guardianship of kingdoms and peoples; and they are endowed accordingly with wisdom, force, and authority for that purpose. When men are entrusted with such preëminence under God, they too frequently employ it for their own private advantage; they forget that they are the servants of God and the people, and place their interests above the claims of morality and religion; they exalt themselves as if there were no God above them, and enforce their will as if there were no hereafter. On the other hand the characteristic of the celestial Principalities is the purity of intention with which they use their powers, seeking not themselves, but the glory of God and the utility of His creatures. Take care to employ with similar conscientiousness and unselfishness whatever preëminence you have received from God over others.

II. The Archangels are described by one of them, Raphael, as "the seven who stand before the Lord" (Job xii. 18). They appear to be the immediate chiefs of the last order of heavenly spirits, to be entrusted with the more important missions to men, and to be possessed of a more abundant grace, and splendour, and power. We learn from Holy

Writ that the Archangel Michael was the leader of the hosts of heaven in the primæval contest between good and evil, when Satan and his followers revolted against their Maker and were cast out from His presence (Apoc. xii. 7). Daniel calls him "the great Prince who standeth for the children of the people" (Dan. xii. 1). He was the protector of the Church of the Old Testament, and now of its successor the Church Catholic. The Archangel Raphael was sent to Tobias in order to exemplify the great doctrine of the angels being the instruments of God's Providence towards men. The Archangel Gabriel was entrusted with the messages from God to those concerned with the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity. Pay due homage to those great spirits. Glorify God on account of them. Implore their powerful assistance.

III. The Angels, in the specialized sense of the word, are the lowest of the nine choirs of blessed spirits; to all of whom, however, the name is applied in a general sense. These are the ordinary messengers of God, so often mentioned in the Old and New Testaments; and to them is committed the guardianship of individual men. They are "all ministering spirits, sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation" (Heb. i. 14). Although they are the lowest of the celestial spirits and inferior to many others in their endowments, yet they far surpass in intelligence, and holiness, and power, and beauty, all that we can conceive; so that those to whom they appeared sometimes thought they had seen the Divinity Itself (Judg. xiii. 22). The virtues that most strike us in them are their humility in undertaking lowly tasks, such as the guardianship of vile beings so inferior to themselves; their contentment with such duties; their devotion towards their Master, which makes them feel that nothing done for His sake can be ignoble; and the perfection and exactness with which they carry out His smallest commands. How pleasing to God is such service, and how glorious. Endeavour to serve Him in the same spirit.

15.—THE TRIAL AND CONFLICT OF THE ANGELS.

I. All beings aspire to act according to the full capacity of their nature. The service of free beings must be free: *i.e.*, the choice must be given to them to serve or not to serve; in other words, a trial or test is necessary. Further, the sight and possession of God with its infinite delights is not the proper due of angels or men. It has pleased the All-wise to offer this transcendent gift as a reward to be earned by fidelity under trial. As to men, so also to the angels, a period of probation was appointed, in which they could exercise their liberty of choice and make themselves worthy of God. How long it lasted we cannot know. It may have been as long as that of the human race, or it may have been instantaneous. There was no need for a lengthy trial; in the angelic nature there is no struggle between heterogeneous components, no clouding of mind by matter; the intelligence is prompt and clear, the will is precise and unwavering. With the angels there was no perturbing influence, no inheritance of perversity to be allowed for, such as make the sins and errors of men more excusable and pardonable. They could grasp at once all the aspects of the question; they could have no need of reconsideration; there was no room in them for repentance. The substantial fact remains that they were needs tested as we are. To them was applied the "golden reed" or scale, "the measure of a man which is of an angel" (Apoc. xxi. 17), the option between the life of mere nature independent of God, or submission to God with supernatural life. Your whole life on earth is arranged simply for the solution of this question. Every act of yours contributes towards it.

II. The dragon's "tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth" (Apoc. xii. 4); for there were many "angels who kept not their principality but forsook their own habitation" (Jude 6); asserting the power of their free-will even to their own destruction. The

greatest of all, Lucifer, the bearer of light, was their leader. His splendid endowments filled him with pride, and fascinated his followers, who took him at his own estimate, and were ready to serve him as their natural good instead of the supreme supernatural Good. The other two thirds, in the full exercise of their freedom, elected to be faithful to their Benefactor and their Love. Learn hence that a good commencement is not all, but perseverance is necessary. Observe that the highest natural endowments are no security for moral rectitude and spiritual insight. "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the learned, nor favour to the skilful" (Eccles. ix. 11). Tremble for yourself, pray, and hope.

III. "There was a great battle in heaven" (Apoc. xii. 7). Such is the universal law of life. From the freedom of the creature proceeds a force opposed to truth and goodness. The two opponents are incompatible and mutually destructive; their activities, being proportioned to their nature, necessarily result in conflict *à outrance*. There is no such thing as compromise, as fellowship, between light and darkness; the only two alternatives are eternal separation or the destruction of one of the terms. The conflict in heaven may have been very long. It would appear that God did not intervene to check natural activities, but allowed them full scope for good or evil, till at last good by its innate divine force prevailed over evil (Apoc. xii. 8). This struggle must have been gigantic and fearful, carried on as it was between forces full of such immense energies; it was the first engagement of the great war in which we are now involved. It is not sufficient for you to choose good and do it quietly; you must further fight the good fight for it. Because of this many fail. They would willingly be virtuous if there were no temptation; faithful, if the price of treason were not so attractive. Trust in the force of Right and Truth, and in their ultimate victory: but remember that the victory depends on your exertions and will cost dearly.

16.—THE SIN OF THE ANGELS.

I. It may reasonably be supposed that every hierarchy and choir furnished its contingent to the host of the revolted angels. In every condition of life some are found unfaithful. Past supernatural graces and the delights of God's friendship are no assurance against a fall. Higher endowments are no preservative, for these are accompanied by greater temptations and more numerous opportunities of sin. Even the cedars of Lebanon have fallen; and those who have eaten the bread of angels have come to lust after the husks of swine. As Lucifer failed, the highest of the Seraphim, the nearest to the throne, the most like unto God, we cannot suppose that any other class was exempt from the dangers that accompany free-will. As Lucifer was the noblest of the blessed spirits, so his sin was the greatest. He had a clearer vision of what he was doing: his powerful will adhered more obstinately to evil; at the same time he owed a deeper debt of gratitude to Him who had made him so great; and the splendour of his natural endowments gave greater encouragement and vigour, and dignity even (we may say), to the cause of evil. How sad to see the destruction of great possibilities of good, and the failure of great promise of happiness! How sad the rejection of God's best gifts, the frustration of His loving designs! How horrible that His mercy should meet with such a return of hostility and hatred! Yet it is of daily occurrence. You may yet come to this; strive and pray that you may not.

II. What was the sin of the angels? We have no definite information as to details. From Holy Scripture and from our experience of human life we may gather data which afford considerable presumption as to the general character of that sin. It would not have been possible for the angels to fall into those sins which are associated with material conditions, such as carnal lusts, the thirst for gold, or physical brutality, which form so large a part of human transgressions.

Their sin would necessarily have been one of the spiritual faculties, the intellect and the will. Such sins would be of less degrading character than ours, but yet of greater guilt, as being offences committed with higher faculties, and with fuller deliberation and knowledge, malice and obstinacy. They may have been transgressions of duties and virtues known to us, or something in kind and degree beyond our comprehension. The civilized man can commit more kinds of crime than the savage; and the sin of the clever cultured man, while less crude and shocking, is more injurious and more full of guile than that of the boor. So the angels with their wider universe, higher duties, finer talents, had opportunities of sin beyond what any man can have. How miserable it is to be subject to so many dangers of sin, and to find them more abundantly even in the gifts of God's mercy! Long for the day of your release.

III. Considering the sin of the angels apart from details, we may safely describe it in general terms as a choice of self instead of God, of independence instead of submission, of their natural conditions, endowments, and satisfactions, instead of those which were attached to the higher, the divine, the supernatural life. This, taking it a little more specifically, may be called the equivalent of a sin of pride; and as such the sin of the angels is usually described by Holy Scripture and by the general consent of the Church. Thus, it is written of the enemy, the emblem of Satan, "He beholdeth every high thing, he is king over all the children of pride" (Job xli. 25). Pride manifests itself under many different forms, and varies in each individual. In the angels it would have the effect, as soon as it was entertained, of destroying at once all that was divine, virtuous and good, and producing an outburst of every kind of deordination and sin. Still we may say, generally speaking, that all the unfaithful angels united in one revolt under their leader against God. Pride is the destruction of all virtue; it is an abomination before God. It attacks all, and its work is secret, swift and fatal. Guard carefully against it.

17.—SPECULATIONS ON THE SIN OF THE ANGELS.

I. It is generally taken for granted that pride was the sin of the angels. It is a sin of the intellect; it is one that accommodates itself to the strongest natures as well as to the meanest; high virtue, and position, and excellence are a direct incentive to it; it seems to disorganize the relation of the creature to its Creator more directly than any other sin. But as to the particular form which pride took in the angels there is much speculation. Some have supposed that it was spiritual luxury, or unbridled delight in themselves, their talents, their dignity, their beauty, without subordination to God. This accords with the Scripture: "Thy heart was lifted up with thy beauty; thou hast lost thy wisdom in thy beauty" (Ez. xxviii. 17). They would thus be seekers of themselves and their private advantage and pleasure, and not of the glory of God. They would make self the aim of their existence, putting it up as a kind of god in the place of the Supreme Goodness which ought to be the object of all created action, love and service. This form of sin is very prevalent in our experience. Men delight in any excellence, natural or inherited, which they possess, and turn God's gift into a source of continual offence against Him and men. They give themselves full credit for it, and never refer it to its giver or use it for His glory. They worship themselves by reason of it and not God.

II. There is another form of pride which affects a different class of minds amongst men. It is a spirit of self-sufficiency and independence, an impatience of all authority and restraint, an attitude of defiance and revolt. This was one of the offences of Israel against the Lord: "Thou hast broken My yoke, thou hast burst My bands, and thou saidst I will not serve" (Jer. ii. 20). This sin is common on earth, and is supposed by some to have been the sin of Satan and his angels. In the earlier stages of this form of pride

among us, there is not professedly any revolt against God, but only against His authority as delegated to others; there is a disinclination to recognize any manifestation of divine truth or law except one's own reason and conscience, or rather, one's own prejudices and whims. The development of this spirit quickly leads to restiveness under the sense of God's overruling authority, angry criticism of the dispositions of His Providence, and finally a positive hatred of God on account of His tranquil supremacy which even men's blasphemies cannot perturb. God continually commands you to be lowly-minded, to bow your neck to the yoke, to submit to authority, to make yourself the servant of all. If you do this you are His.

III. It is very generally supposed that the satanic revolt was connected with the revelation of the Incarnation of the Son of God. He is first-born of all beings; all creatures are produced through Him; in His name all are required to bow whether on earth, in heaven or in hell; and there is no other name in which salvation is bestowed. As this is true of all beings as well as man, it is thought that the mystery of the Incarnation may have been revealed to the angels, as the efficient cause of the glory they were to receive; and that they were required to pay homage to the Second Divine Person in His human nature; and that they refused to humble themselves to the Godhead when united to a nature inferior to their own. This view harmonizes with the words of Our Lord where He speaks of the hatred of Satan as being anterior to His human existence, and identical with that of His Jewish enemies. "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and he stood not in the truth" (John viii. 44). Humble yourself before Jesus. Confess Him and glorify Him in the Gospel history, in the Church, in the Most Holy Sacrament. Under these three manifestations the Incarnation is at this day the great object of Satan's hatred, and of the attacks of fallen spirits angelic and human.

18.—THE AWARD OF THE JUDGE.

I. When the trial and conflict of the angels was over, a separation of good and bad took place. The "great dragon was cast out, the old serpent . . . and his angels were thrown down with him" (Apoc. xii. 9). The good angels were confirmed in grace and in the possession of heaven. This involves a summing up of results and a judicial award, a preliminary general judgment of the supramundane universe. In all that was essential, the angels had worked out their destiny and made their final choice for once and all. Our Lord implies this judgment where He says, "the prince of this world is already judged" (John xvi. 11). The conflict is still being continued, but in this lower sphere. When that is complete, the final summing up and judgment of all will take place; and in this the angels will be included, according to the Apostle: "The angels who kept not their principality . . . He hath reserved under darkness in everlasting chains unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6). That will be the day of the great victory of God. It will be the manifestation of His justice and mercy, the revelation of the hidden ways of His providence, the justification of His dealings with men and angels. Then will you, if among the blessed, rejoice, that, having trusted in the Lord, He has delivered you. Let the thought of that day make you patient in the obscurities and difficulties of this life.

II. From the moment of their creation, the angels had possessed natural beatitude, consisting in the exercise of their natural powers and faculties upon God as their object. To this God had added, as in the case of Adam and Eve, a certain supernatural grace and divine indwelling in them, which was accompanied by a clearer revelation and knowledge of Himself. The good angels, having proved

their fidelity, and passed through the difficulties of the conflict with evil, were admitted by God to the fulness of their reward, to the sight of the Beatific Vision, and to the state of confirmation in grace for ever. From what Our Lord has revealed to us concerning the future general judgment of the world, we may picture to ourselves that first judgment in heaven. The Eternal Father would have rehearsed the services of the spirits found faithful, comforted them for the troubles they had undergone, commended their virtues, invited them to take possession of their kingdom. What overwhelming joy for those blessed spirits! What surprise at the unmerited abundance of their reward! You are now enduring their experiences of trial and conflict. Be patient and persevere, and you will enjoy their experiences of judgment and glory.

III. At the same time God exercised His justice by awarding to the traitor angels the lot that they had deliberately chosen for themselves. They had sought for self without God; He leaves them to themselves without any portion of the Supreme Good, which is Himself. They had rejected and scorned His love, and bounty, and indwelling presence; He of necessity withdraws these, and leaves His irreconcilable foes to their own pride, perversity, blasphemy, falsehood, unsatisfied desire, frustrated spite, hatred of goodness and virtue. "And that great dragon was cast out, that old serpent who is called the devil and Satan, who seduceth the whole world; and he was cast to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying: Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ, because the accuser of our brethren is cast forth" (Apoc. xii. 9, 10). Thus was evil overthrown once in its conflict with good. So it will be again, and its next overthrow will be final. Do not be discouraged at the temporary preëminence of evil. Right and Truth are stronger and must prevail.

19.—THE PUNISHMENT OF THE BAD ANGELS.

I. The first and chief punishment of the fallen angels in hell is the pain of loss, the deprivation of God and of all that holds from Him, *i.e.* of all good. 1. They have lost the Beatific Vision, the sight of God in all His love and His beauty. 2. They have lost their position of dignity and the company of the blessed. 3. Also such supernatural advantages as they had before the trial, including faith, hope and charity. 4. Although they retain their natural faculties and powers, yet they have lost the natural happiness which springs from employing these in the natural apprehension and service of God; for God is the only object which can satisfy even the natural faculties and elicit all their activity, and He has been utterly rejected and lost. Thus are these perverted beings deprived by their own choice of every advantage but bare existence and the faculties that belong to their nature. Consider what it is to lose at once all that is good, and for ever. What a multitude of things you require to make life happy or even endurable: the angels require much more on account of their greater activities and capacities. Think what it is to lose but one of the minor gifts of God, a sense or bodily liberty or health, wife or child, fortune, good-name or employment. Such a loss often makes life unendurable, makes all other goods worthless, drives men to desperation. What will it be to lose everything!

II. The sin of the bad angels further inflicts a direct and most fearful punishment on them. In virtue of the transformation of energy, every cause produces effects adequate to its character. Sin, as the supreme evil, inflicts a supreme injury on the sinner, where it is not, as here, restrained by God's power. It inflicts evils such as the creations of God's goodness cannot cause; for every action of God is good and produces only good, excepting such superficial evils as are substantially for the good of His creatures. Thus sin be-

comes its own avenger and the exact measure of its punishment. The revolted angels chose sin for their lot, and it worked itself out upon them as soon as its full power was unchained against them by the withdrawal of God whom they rejected. Beware how you admit sin into your heart. It comes under the guise of pleasure or gain or false honour. It seems harmless, for its evil effects are known as yet only by faith. Its activities are half dormant at present, restrained by God, who has not yet withdrawn from you, and they are mitigated by the other gifts of God which you still retain. One false step leads to others. Then death comes; the soul is fixed in the evil it has chosen; all else drops away, and sin stands revealed in all its horror and cruelty as the condition of the soul for eternity.

III. This state of things will never change. It is fixed by the indomitable will of the wicked angels formed with full deliberation. Now that they find themselves stricken and powerless, their pride hardens them still more in their rebellion. They will not yield under punishment to Him whom they defied; their hatred will not transform itself into ecstatic love. They will for ever prefer hell itself with the power of blaspheming the Most Holy, to the delights of intercourse with Him purchased only by humility and submission. "The pride of them that hate Thee ascendeth continually" (Ps. lxxiii. 23). This is the most terrible effect of sin. It so transforms the mind and will as to make them impervious to the light of truth and warmth of God's love. The merciful calls to repentance and offers of pardon become an unendurable irritation, and only move the sinner to greater hostility towards infinite holiness. Still less do the horrible consequences of their sin excite tenderness and contrition: on the contrary "they gnawed their tongues for pain: and they blasphemed the God of heaven for their pains and wounds, and did not penance for their works" (Apoc. xv. 10, 11). This is the only obstacle to the forgiveness of sins; this turns the transitory act into an eternal sin.

20.—THE TEMPTATIONS OF THE EVIL SPIRITS.

I. In nature, God allows all creatures to exercise their proper activities without interference. They may be contradictory to others and may produce catastrophes, but out of it all there proceeds harmony and a higher good. So all spiritual beings are allowed to use their powers according to their free will, whether rightly or perversely. Wrongdoing is not visited straightway with extinction, or with restraint of activity or liberty; it plays its part, and is controlled by God to a good end. The forces of right and wrong are allowed to wage an unending strife until the time comes to separate them eternally. As bad men are allowed to live out their full course unhindered, so Satan and his followers remain in the universe where they were to have acted as ministers of God, and there they carry on a work of their own, according to their desires and capacities. Hatred of the supreme good, envy of men who are one day to occupy their places in heaven, fierce pride, malicious love of evil for its own sake, these are their motive forces. They endeavour to thwart the designs of God, to establish a reign of falsehood and vice, to deceive and corrupt men, to turn them against their Creator and lead them to eternal misery. It is fearful to think of our being exposed to conflicts with spirits so malicious and so superior to us. But it is for our advantage; and some day we shall see how much good God has educed from that evil.

II. Almighty Wisdom has balanced all things so justly in the universe that no excess in any force is able to destroy the due order of things. In the spiritual universe also there are laws and limitations, beyond the reach of our investigation, which prevent the terrible power of the devils from destroying us by forcing us to sin. Human liberty is sacred and is amply safeguarded. The Omnipotent Himself will not infringe it, even for His glory and our eternal advantage:

still less would He permit us to be overborne against our will, and made the sport of Satan, and hurried, unwilling victims, to destruction. The devils can suggest evil to us, can present error in the guise of truth, and wickedness as beautiful and refined; they may even induce us in sheer ignorance to do that which is, in itself, sinful; but they cannot force us to commit sin in a responsible way. The mind and will are always supreme and free, even when man has weakened their dominion by subjecting himself to habits of sin. For anything that man does without full advertence of the intelligence and full adhesion of the will to evil, there is no sin, no responsibility, no punishment. Thank God for thus securing your liberty against the assaults of your deadly enemies.

III. God counterbalances evil by the forces which He has placed at our disposition, His own presence, our faith, prayer and the command of grace, and the special guardianship of good angels. We have within our grasp the certain means of securing the victory over all the temptations of Satan. If we do our best, however little that be, we secure the omnipotence of God on our side, and our weakness becomes stronger than all the craft and violence of Satan, whether exercised through men or devils. Our first requirement in this struggle is humility; this involves distrust of ourselves and confidence in God. It is necessary also to avoid and fly from the occasions of sin; otherwise our confidence becomes a tempting of God. We must resist the first approaches of temptation, so as to give no foothold to the tempter. Finally, persevering prayer obtains a continual supply of powerful graces. Observing these conditions you may rely absolutely on the promise: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able: but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. x. 13). Meet temptation courageously and joyfully. It is thus you bear your part in the great conflict of good with evil.

21.—THE INTERCOMMUNION OF THE ANGELS.

I. Social life arises among beings possessed of intelligence; and it consists primarily in the intercommunion of mind with mind. In the Trinity there is a Divine Society, with interior communications between the three Persons. The divine mind also enters into communication with human minds by means of revelation. Animals can communicate simple emotions to one another by inarticulate cries. Men deaf and dumb can exchange ideas by gesture. With normal men communication is much more complete; it embraces large groups of ideas, and enters into minute detail. By sounds, facial expression, and a system of little marks on paper, men can reproduce their thoughts and emotions in others most vividly. But this method is gross and imperfect, whereby mind communicates with mind through physical signs addressed to the eye or ear, passing through the nerves to the brain, and thence into the immaterial consciousness. The angels, being pure intelligence, communicate directly and instantaneously, without physical medium, without the waste that accompanies so many transformations of energy, and without the misunderstandings that ensue with us. How sublime must be the speech of the angels; how much more extended in its range than ours! As the conversation of the learned surpasses that of the savage, so does the converse of the blessed and the angels surpass that of earth. This alone will be a great source of delight in heaven.

II. The angels, being of different kinds and classes, vary in their intelligence and knowledge and other faculties. They represent in different ways the infinitely different aspects of the divine perfections, which can only be reflected very partially in any individual or class. As every man has much which he can bestow on others and which others need, so the angels have communications to make to one another, arising out of the abundance of the gifts of God to them,

and their various apprehension of His wonderful mysteries. "Goodness is diffusive of itself." Throughout creation we see communication of benefits from one to another. The sun bestows light, heat and energy on this world; plants contribute oxygen to the air for our breathing, and food for animals and men; and our duty is to expend care and supervision on the inferior creation, to exchange ideas, services and love with our fellows, and to offer worship and obedience to God. The angels, too, must be subject to this law of life. They must communicate, according to their nature, with one another and with men. As a member of the Church you have come consciously into the company of the angels (Heb. xiii. 22). That implies active communication: you will honour them, they will pray for you.

III. God works in all beings through the intermediary of others, who thus become His agents and the channels of His gifts. God provides for us temporally and spiritually through parents, rulers, teachers, priests, through the talents and goodness of many men. So God's agents in maintaining vegetation are the sun, the soil, and moisture; these transmit the sap of life through roots, trunk, branches, twigs, veins of the leaf, to the smallest atoms of the tree. So too among the angels there must be communications of knowledge and grace from choir to choir and angel to angel, from first to last. The inexhaustible source of truth and holiness in God is ever providing new material for these communications. The spiritual sap of life is for ever circulating through all the ramifications of the celestial universe; and every individual is progressing unceasingly in knowledge, love and happiness, by reason of these communications. All God's servants of this world and the next are united into the great society of the Communion of Saints. That means mutual communication. Each gives and receives. Each aids and is aided. Each prays and is prayed for. Each must be the intermediary of God to others, imitating in his way the supreme mediation of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

22.—THE FUNCTIONS OF THE ANGELS.

I. St. Paul says of the angels, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?" (Heb. i. 14). God employs them as His agents, as intermediate, secondary causes of the works of various kinds which He carries out for the benefit of mankind. God also uses men as the agents of His dealings with other men; to exercise the functions of Providence towards them, enlighten their minds, move them to goodness, help them to save their souls. God uses further the intelligence of man for the material development of this earth, by the discovery of its secrets and the manipulation of its great forces, such as electricity, for example. The angels are an innumerable multitude of immense intellectual forces. Every creature of God has its utilities, and these are proportioned to its nature and activity. The angels have functions to fulfil on this earth, as Scripture itself informs us, and these may be material as well as spiritual. It may well be, in accordance with a widely received supposition, that the Almighty made use of the instrumentality of the angels in the development of the universe, and in the maintenance and guidance of it subsequently. How grand a conception of nature this opens out to us! The possibilities that we can imagine are wonderful, and it is certain that the actual facts are more wonderful still. When we see in God all things as they are, we shall discover for the first time marvellous harmonies of the spiritual and material universes which are hidden from our present science.

II. More important than the material disposition of the universe is that race of beings for whom this earth at least was made. The salvation of mankind is that which most of all contributes to the divine glory, and this must be, consequently, the chief interest of the angels on this earth, and

their chief occupation. Men form corporate bodies and societies which have a common action and distinct spirit of their own, and which need a peculiar guidance and graces from God in addition to those which are bestowed on individuals for their separate advantage. It is reasonable to suppose that some of God's "ministering spirits" are appointed to superintend the life and action of societies and assist them in the universal struggle for right against wrong. This accords with the words of Holy Scripture: "He hath given His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways. In their hands shall they bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone" (Ps. xc. 11, 12). The prophet Daniel tells us of the angelic Princes set over Israel and the Persians and Greeks. There were also tutelary angels of the Holy Place in Jerusalem. So we may suppose that kingdoms and religious houses and churches have their special protectors, to watch over their spiritual interests, and protect them from the malevolence of the evil spirits. Pay homage to the angels of such places as you live in or of churches that you visit.

III. The universal sense of the Christian people has always clung to the beautiful idea of Guardian Angels being appointed by God to every individual child of Adam, to protect them, pray for them, move them to good, and in every way to promote their salvation. This is a manifestation of the grandeur and power of God, in that He is able to assign such a multitude of glorious spirits to the charge of one department of creation. It shows how valuable we are in the sight of God, and what immense love and care He has for us. There are depths of wisdom, as yet inscrutable, in this system by which God sustains us in our conflict with evil, strengthens us against the malice and fearful power of our tempters, and maintains a just balance of forces in the spiritual world. Glorify God for His greatness as shown in the angels; thank Him for His tender care of you; be always mindful of your companion angel.

23.--THE GUARDIAN ANGELS.

1. Those spirits are called Guardian Angels who are deputed to take charge of individual men. We do not know to which choirs this duty is committed, but it is generally attributed to the ninth or lowest choir. Even these, however, are princes of the house of God, and are of surpassing splendour and ability. It may be that spirits of higher rank and power are given charge of more distinguished servants of God who have a more difficult vocation than the average, such as Apostles, Popes, founders of orders, Bishops, missionaries, great rulers of men. There are examples in Scripture of other orders of blessed spirits being employed on this earth. Thus, one of the Cherubim was placed at the gates of Paradise with a flaming sword, a Seraph was sent to purify Isaias with a burning ember from the altar, and Archangels were sent at other times, Raphael to Tobias, Michael to Daniel and St. John, Gabriel to Zachary, the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph. Every human being, however degraded and wicked, has an angel as his guardian and companion all through life. Learn hence to esteem every soul without exception as being the recipient of so high a favour from God. Like their angels, never fail in hope and in prayer for their salvation. Learn the same lesson as St. Peter: "God hath showed me not to call any man common or unclean" (Acts x. 28).

II. Our Guardian Angels take charge of us from the first instant of our existence, and remain with us through our whole course up to the moment of death. All through life they are at hand to help us in spiritual, and perhaps also in corporal needs, especially in resisting temptation, picking our steps through the embarrassments of life, keeping up our

courage, persevering in fidelity to God. They do not abandon us when we fall from grace and make ourselves enemies of God. Our case may seem hopeless to men, but our guardian never loses hope or relaxes in his efforts. To the very end he watches, intercedes for us, and perhaps is able at the last moment to snatch his charge from the jaws of perdition. He accompanies us before the judgment seat of God to render an account of his stewardship, and witness either for or against us. It is generally believed that our guardian is God's messenger of comfort and relief to us in purgatory, and that he will be our comrade and inseparable companion for all eternity. You ought to remember always this invisible presence; you ought not to live in utter insensibility to one who does so much for you, and who is so closely associated with your life by God. Your intercourse with him should not be one-sided; you should reply to his care with prayer, confidence and love.

III. The interest of our Angel Guardian in us is second only to that of God, of Jesus Christ, of His Blessed Mother. It does not matter who or what his charge is. Lazarus is as valuable as Dives; the heresiarch or the persecutor, Judas, Simon Magus, Mahomet, Luther, even Antichrist himself is as much the object of his guardian's care as the Apostle or Martyr. Whether we be lambs or goats, predestinate or reprobate, our angels see in us only a soul created in the image of the Most Holy, bedewed with the blood of Redemption, one capable to the last of becoming a companion of the blessed in glory. So their task is always honourable, always dear to them, always deserving of their most zealous exertions. Even if their efforts prove to be in vain, still they have the assurance of having done their best for their Master and accomplished His will. What comfort and encouragement you should derive from this! God has placed one of His princes at your beck and call; and all his talents and love are at your service. Be true to God and to yourself and you cannot fail of victory and reward.

24.—ANGELS AND MEN COMPARED.

I. In their natural constitution and endowments the angels are far superior to men. The Psalmist, asking what is man or the son of man, answers, "Thou hast made him a little less than the angels" (Ps. viii. 6). They are our superiors even though appointed to be, in a way, our attendants and guards. The angels are more perfect representations than men of the spiritual and intellectual being of the Almighty, so that they are called "the seal of resemblance" (Ez. xxviii. 12). Further, they were created in the immaterial heaven, we on earth. They now see God face to face in His glory; we only in a dark manner by faith. They have the joy of possession, we must have patience in tribulation. They possess a beatified life, our most earnest desire is for a happy death. They live to God, we have to die to the world. They possess perfect justice, we need perfect penance. They have the completion, we the commencement of supernatural life. Therefore we may say of the angels as compared with men, "The cedars in the paradise of God were not higher than he . . . neither were the plane trees to be compared to him . . . no tree in the paradise of God was like him in his beauty" (Ez. xxxi. 8). Rejoice in the greatness of these noble beings, without envying them or despising your condition. Look up to them as to elder brethren. Venerate them for their nearness to God and the likeness they bear to Him.

II. In several respects angels and men are alike. 1. Both classes are from the hand of God and made in His image. "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?" (Mal. ii. 10). 2. Both possess spirituality, although in different forms, also immortality, intelligence, liberty. 3. Both arrive at beatitude by the same means; through faith and love of God, struggle, fidelity and per-

severance. 4. Both depend for being and salvation on the Son of God, Jesus Christ, and are united in Him as members of the one body; they also live by Him, for the sacred bread from heaven given for the nourishment of men is also called the Bread of Angels. 5. In the resurrection mankind "shall be as the angels of God in heaven" (Matt. xxii. 30); being on the same footing and in the same ranks, enjoying the same inheritance and the same vision of God. Endeavour to make perfect this resemblance to the angels, by living the life of the angels, imitating their sanctity, their unworldliness, their devotion to God and their accomplishment of His will.

III. There are some respects in which man surpasses the angels. 1. Human nature and not the angelic has been joined in hypostatic union with the Eternal Word; so that men are specially the brethren of the Son of God. "Nowhere doth He take hold of the angels, but of the seed of Abraham He taketh hold" (Heb. ii. 16). 2. We have the privilege of undergoing sufferings and pains for God's sake, and being tried in ways that were not open to the angels; the singular glory of martyrdom belongs to us by reason of our being subject to death; and our carnal state and its temptations afford occasion for the brilliant virtue of chastity, which raises us above our natural level and makes us "like to the angels of God in heaven." 3. We have that most happy advantage, not possible in the angels who fell, of being able to repent of our sins and live anew to grace, and even of gaining higher glory after sinning than if we had never sinned. 4. We shall receive a double reward and happiness in heaven, bodily as well as spiritual, on account of our double conflict and double service; and some of our race will possibly take higher rank and glory in heaven than some among the angels. Thus you have compensations for your present lowliness and afflictions. Be contented with your lot, and take courage, considering the reward. Before long you will take your place among the choirs of angels.

25.—THE HONOUR DUE TO THE ANGELS.

I. The Angels of God merit veneration at our hands. In the Old Testament we read of God's servants adoring them or prostrating before them. So did Abraham, and Lot, and Joshua, so also did St. John the Evangelist. We should honour them 1, for their sanctity, the most beautiful and admirable of all qualities, and more deserving of reverence than intellectual abilities, or strength of character, or wealth, or natural benevolence. 2. For the benefits we receive from them. God is the source of these, but the angels are His willing agents in these benefactions, and fulfil their part with zeal and affection; they act as our best friends; and our salvation, under God, depends to a considerable extent on the assistance we receive from them. 3. Their excellence, their high position in the spiritual order, and their resemblance to God claim recognition from us. As we render filial honour to parents, civil honour to magistrates and monarchs, respect to age, to virtue, to talent; so are we bound to render religious honour to those who are the manifestations of the supernatural perfections of the Infinite God. This is a matter of strict duty for you. You must not allow any class of God's creatures to pass without rendering to them what their character demands. Have you always paid due respect to so important a body of your fellow-creatures?

II. In what way ought the angels to be honoured? 1. By remembrance of them, and by reflection on their qualities and their works, their fidelity to God and to us. 2. By affections, arising from these thoughts, of respect for their greatness, congratulation on their happiness, admiration of their virtues, gratitude for their assistance, love in return for

their love. 3. By considering in detail and endeavouring to imitate their virtues, obedience, contentment, conformity to God's will, zeal for His glory, patience with their wayward charges, their sweetness, purity, love, tranquillity, activity, and their constant union with their God. 4. We should rely on the power of the angels' intercession with God, for they always see His face and they merit to be heard for their holiness; we should ask them to help us in our needs, and to offer our prayers like vials of odours before the throne of God. 5. We may honour our neighbour on account of the angel who is always with him, and the dignity he derives therefrom. Recur to the angels on all occasions as being your best friends, your natural protectors, advisers, advocates, assigned to you by God.

III. In our devotion to the angels we should be mindful of them all, and we shall be able to discover different motives for honouring and asking the assistance of each of their choirs. Principally we should honour our Angel Guardian with whom we have been directly associated by the Providence of God; it is his special duty to help us in all our necessities, and we have already received incalculable favours at his hands. We should also nourish a particular devotion to St. Michael. He is one of the very few whose name has been revealed to us; and he is associated with us as the supreme guardian of the Catholic Church, its protector against the rage of hell, the warrior of the Lord, and the prince of the hosts of heaven. We may also select any special choir of the angels for particular homage on account of their proximity to God, or supremacy over His earthly kingdom, or for their special relation to God by their characteristic virtues, or the similarity of their functions tc ours. By devotion to the angels we verify those words: "You are come to Mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of angels . . . and to the spirits of the just made perfect" (Heb. xii. 22, 23).

MEDITATIONS ON CHRISTIAN DOGMA.

TREATISE IV.

CREATION.

THE WORLD AND MAN.

1.—THE CREATION OF THE WORLD.

I. There is a regular progression in the productive activity of God the Creator. First, there is the internal activity of intellect and will, which produced from all eternity and is now producing the Persons of the Blessed Trinity. Then came the external activity of God on the spiritual plane, which produced the angels. Lastly comes the external activity which produced the material universe. After having been the origin of angels and their supernatural order, with its varied life and its laws which transcend our intelligence, God becomes, in the creation of this world, the source of the mundane order. God is the producer of its substance, life, and movement; His infinite intelligence and will, revealed in this world, become the immutable code of natural laws. Thus there are three lines of procession, the one divine eternal and internal, and two external, of which one is spiritual and the other material. The material is brought into union with the spiritual in human nature, and these two, when perfected, return into the higher union with God in the supernatural life of grace and glory. Praise and adore the Lord as expressing Himself in this wonderful triple series of harmonious action. You are one atom in it. Take care to keep your place in it and fill it worthily. Avoid sin, which violates the harmony, and breaks the continuity, and cuts you out from your place in that series.

II. Creation is production out of nothing by God. Although this action lies entirely on the natural material plane, yet it is beyond the grasp of our investigation and imagination. We cannot say what it is or how it is. We can trace the works of God far back through incalculable æons, but we can never see His hand actually forming them. The direct creative action is wrapped in mystery impenetrable. In the long process of creation there is a triad of stages which defy our research. We cannot tell how the original energy breathed forth from the Spirit of the Lord brooding

over the abysses, comes to express itself in extended matter. Nor, although science has led us to the very frontier of life, can we detect the action which changes inorganic substance into the living organism. Nor can all our investigations solve the mystery of the origin of reason in a world of irrational beings. Every creature asks the question, Whence did the universe come? Men have forgotten the truth, or perverted it, or overlaid it with their speculations. God, therefore, proclaims to us as the first truth of the natural order and the moral order: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth" (Gen. i. 1). The deepest gratitude is due for these brief words. They save us from fatal errors; they are the dawn of spiritual light.

III. The universe is ancient beyond what language can express, but it is not eternal. Eternity is a quality of the Infinite alone—of God. The universe is subject to conditions of time and space, to succession and movement; this state is incompatible with the Godhead and with eternity. Secular science can instruct us thus far, that the universe had a beginning and will have an end. Investigations into molecules and atoms show them to be "manufactured articles"; and it is no less manifest that all the conditions which fall under our observation point to an ultimate exhaustion of energy and to extinction. The stages of creation are not supernatural, nor miraculous, nor are they breaks in the natural order. They lie entirely within the limits of the natural plane; they are one harmonious and continuous process, acting in accordance with a supreme law which is invariable and complete, and needs no supplementing, *viz.*, the immutable idea in the divine mind. Man does not know the law which regulated the first appearance of matter, of life, of reason. Each was a new, but still a normal action, induced by God in His character of source of natural order and law. The first intervention of the supernatural was at the infusion of sanctifying grace into man. Worship that infinite power which has "ordered all things in measure and number and weight" (Wisd. xi. 21).

2.—THE FIRST DAY.

I. The word "Creation" means strictly production of being out of nothing; but it is often used in a broader sense as including the subsequent evolution and arrangement of the world which completed it for its purpose. Creative action proper was limited to that enormous antecedent period which is called "in the beginning." Holy Scripture gives no details of this, but only relates the ordering of our planet during geological time. The surmise of St. Augustine and St. Gregory of Nyssa to this effect has in modern times received scientific corroboration. It is very probable that Moses saw the history of creation unrolled before him in a vision, or in a succession of visions on different days. He then described his impressions in the language of his day, in a way that would be intelligible to a simple and unlearned race, and he so adapted his account as to make it of religious rather than of scientific import. Glorify God for His goodness in granting such a revelation at the beginning of human history. Without it, mankind would have had no conception of many most important truths till their discovery by scientific research in this present century.

II. The days of creation are not the days of men, but of Him who is eternal, and to whom ages are as minutes. Their incalculable duration is a testimony to the infinity of His life. They are not definitely marked successive periods, but they overlap and run into one another. Moses follows the actual order of events as he saw them, noting in particular those which were characteristic of the different epochs; and he summarizes each set of events in a single day, although it may have commenced during an earlier epoch and extended into a later one. Thus each day of the week becomes commemorative of some particular manifestation of the power of the One God; and this served to wean the

Israelites from the Gentile practice of consecrating the days to different false divinities. Hence Moses divided the work of creation into seven scenes corresponding to the division of time which had prevailed from the patriarchal ages, and adapted it so as to give a new sanction to the old observance of the Sabbatical rest. Every day should be to you a Lord's day, consecrated by the remembrance of God's manifestations in His mysteries or His Saints, and by some special service rendered by you to Him.

III. The first Mosaic day corresponds to the first period of the earth's existence as a globe. Previously there had been a glowing nebular mass in violent motion; this had gradually condensed, had taken a revolving motion, and had thrown off whirling rings which broke and concentrated into globes. For a long period this earth remained in an incandescent molten state, an unformed chaos without life, and surrounded by a veil of heavy exhalations which the light could not penetrate. While slowly cooling down and becoming solid, "the earth was void and empty, and darkness was upon the face of the deep" (Gen. i. 2). "And the spirit of God moved (brooded, Heb.) over the waters" (*ib.*). This was not the divine Spirit, nor was it the wind, for there was then no atmosphere, but some natural force from God which infused the first germs of life into the chaos. We have geological evidence of the prevalence of darkness in the first stages of the earth's existence, and of this first beginning of life preceding by a long time the production of fully developed animals. "And God said, Be light made" (*ib.*). This was the first step in the evolution of the earth. It may mean the definite condensation of the sun, or the first partial penetration of its rays through the overhanging cloud. This was only a half-light and not the full light of the sun. This represents the first glimmer of grace in our souls. By fidelity to this, "the path of the just, as a shining light, goeth forwards and increaseth even to perfect day" (Prov. iv. 18). Pray God for light, and be careful to follow it.

3.—THE SECOND DAY.

I. On the second day "God made a firmament, and divided the waters that were under the firmament from those that were above the firmament, and it was so. And God called the firmament heaven" (Gen. i. 7, 8). By the "firmament" the Jews understood what we call the atmosphere. Here Moses accurately describes a most important operation that took place early in the earth's history. At that epoch there was a seething indescribable mass of matter, shrouded in thick poisonous vapours of carbonic-acid gas, which made life impossible for breathing creatures. The forms of life belonging to this geological period include no air-breathing animals. In order to prepare the earth to be the abode of higher creatures, the next step was to dispose of this poisonous gas, and to combine the proper gases into air and water. The formation of the atmosphere extended through this and the following day, but the two stages in which it was accomplished were so different that they may well be considered as different epochs, according to the arrangement of the Mosaic narrative. The work of this second day was the condensation of oxygen and hydrogen into water, and the formation of dense clouds by the evaporation of the water under the influence of the still intense heat. Admire the wonderful and gigantic contrivances of nature, *i.e.*, of the Author of nature, by which He brings about His purposes. Equally wonderful, though more hidden, are the spiritual contrivances by which He leads you to salvation.

II. As the dry land had not yet appeared, the aspect of the earth now presented to the eye would have been as Holy Scripture describes it. There was a great expanse of newly formed waters covering the earth in one universal ocean. From this arose a second great body of water in the form of

steam and clouds, suspended high above the surface of the ocean, floating on a thick stratum of the heavier air still intermingled with carbonic-acid gas, which did not disappear till the end of the next period. This was the expanse of the firmament which separated the waters from the waters, the upper ones from the lower ones, or the watery vapours from the actual water. Under the changed conditions, air-breathing animals begin to appear in the strata laid down at this period. Thus did God work a great revolution, changing what was noxious into bright wholesome air, and multiplying higher forms of life accordingly. So in the spiritual order God dissipates the clouds of error and prejudice and sin, and brings you into a new atmosphere of faith and holiness.

III. The atmosphere is a wonderful and beneficent work of God. It extends round the whole earth to a height of perhaps fifty miles, or even as some think to two hundred miles in a very rarefied condition. It moderates the burning heat of the sun by day, and keeps the surface warmth from entirely evaporating by night; thus it prevents extremes of heat and cold which would make life impossible. It is also a shield to protect us from being bombarded by the millions of shooting stars which fall to the earth every day; it reduces them by its friction to gas, which, on cooling, falls gently in a very fine dust. The movements of the atmosphere in the form of winds convey the evaporations of the ocean from the tropics towards the poles, depositing snow and rain, filling the rivers, irrigating the fields, cooling one district and warming another. The air also provides men and beasts with oxygen, which enters the lungs and supplies the fuel that maintains life and energy. Glorify God for all these wonders by adoring His greatness, beneficence and providence. In the words of the Scriptures call on the winds and rains, the heat and cold, to bless the name of the Lord by carrying out His will and manifesting His perfections.

4.—THE THIRD DAY.

I. The third day is characterized by two operations: the waters that were under heaven were gathered together so that the dry land appeared, and the earth brought forth the green herb (Gen. i. 9-12). The peculiarities noted by Moses on this day are distinctly marked in the records of geology. In the period preceding this, known as the Silurian epoch, there are no traces of land vegetation or land animals; it is evident also that there was but little light, as the specimens of marine life have no organs of vision. The Devonian system, which corresponds to this day, was conspicuous for great volcanic disturbances and the wholesale upheaval of mountain ranges above the surface of the world-wide sea. The water was still at a very high temperature, as appears from the structure of the fish of that period. They were ganoid, or protected from the heat by a sort of coat of armour of bony material. As the waters gradually cooled these species disappeared and were replaced by others. How marvellous are the records of God's creative action written in the bowels of the mountains or on the bed of the ocean, and now brought to light with so much ingenuity and patient labour! So God tells us now in another form the same history that He conveyed to earlier men in the simple words of the Hebrew Lawgiver.

II. The second operation of this day was the development of vegetable life from the germs infused into the earth by the spirit of the Lord on the first day. This was supereminently the age of vegetation. The earth was covered with a luxurious abundance of verdure, far surpassing that of the tropical forests of the present epoch. The trees and plants were

not those that we are acquainted with; they were chiefly one great family of plants, eight hundred species of which have been identified, while the flora of our times number perhaps a hundred thousand species. Under the conditions of great heat and moisture, subdued light, and an excess of carbonic acid in the atmosphere, thousands of generations of trees shot up rapidly, decayed, and gave place to others. The Carboniferous strata, which contain the compressed and solidified remains of that vegetation, are about ten thousand feet in thickness. The character of these plants as found by us now in coal shows that they did not live in sunlight such as we now enjoy. There are no season rings in them, and their texture shows that the light which fell upon them abounded in actinic rays, but was deficient in the bright ones. Thus did God make provision for the wants of man millions of years before his existence, by the laws which He laid down for the course of nature.

III. This same epoch was marked by the laying down of thick beds of carboniferous limestone; these consist, to the extent of one half, of pure carbonic acid, which was absorbed from the atmosphere. The enormous vegetation that covered the earth had decomposed vast quantities of the same gas and released pure oxygen into the air. By these two means the poisonous heavy atmosphere of the earth was gradually changed into its present condition; at the same time the excess of heat was radiated into space; and thus the earth became a suitable abode for air-breathing animals, the harbingers of man. How wonderful is this gradual progress from stage to stage, during the slow lapse of millions of years, without effort, without error, without the need of interferences and rectifications of the plan and of the laws laid down at first by the great Creator! All was foreseen, all was decreed, and all came about in due course through the action of the irresistible will of God. Do not dare to oppose that calm, eternal, universal, overwhelming force.

5.—THE FOURTH DAY.

I. On the fourth day, Moses, viewing creation in vision as if from the surface of the earth, according to probability, saw a new revelation of divine greatness, when the expanse of the heavens was opened to him, illumined by sun, and moon, and planets, and the millions of more distant stars. His description is that of an eye-witness, and not of an investigator who goes behind the visible fact. It does not mean that the celestial world was created from nothing at this epoch, nor that it was formed from pre-existing matter at this epoch, but that it appeared in existence for the first time to the visionary spectator. The heavenly bodies were not actually made on this day, for the outer planets of our system were cast off from the revolving nebular mass before our earth ; and the glowing matter was probably far advanced in the process of condensation into the sun, even if it had not already formed it, at the epoch when Moses takes up the story of the earth on the first day. The glimmering light of the first three days was probably that of the sun, which could only penetrate dimly through the heavy curtain of vapour round the earth. The actual event of the fourth day, the day that succeeded the Carboniferous period of the great vegetation, was the clearing away of the thick layer of gas and aqueous vapour which had for so many years obscured the heavens, the visible appearance of the sun, and the commencement of the order of days and seasons. Geology witnesses to this. The closer texture of plants, their greater variety, and the appearance of season rings in trees, show that sunshine, as we know it, began only at this advanced period of the earth's development. God is hidden from many men by the voluntary clouds of prejudice and worldliness. Because they cannot see Him they profess disbelief. But He is there all the same.

II. How glorious this earth must have seemed when the full light of the sun streamed upon it for the first time ; and there was none to look upon it till Moses saw it in vision

millions of years later. How wonderful is the sun! It is the source, not only of light and heat, but of all mechanical force and motion on our earth. Its attraction keeps the great bulk of our globe moving in its orbit. It raises millions of tons of water daily from the sea in the form of clouds. It puts the wind in motion to convey these North and South, and distribute them in rain and snow. This supplies the glaciers and rivers, which by their motion wear down mountains and continents, and transport their débris to form new strata beneath the ocean. The sun supplies substance to plants, which then nourish men and animals for their labours. It has stored in coal all the heat which we now draw forth for the production of power in our machinery. Yet all this is only one part in five hundred millions of the energy radiated by the sun. And what is this to the total energy of the whole universe? And what is that to the infinite power of God? Wonder at it and worship God.

III. The heavens also manifest the immensity of God. Our distance from the sun is ninety-three millions of miles. Suppose this to be represented on a reduced scale as two hundred feet; then the distance of the nearest fixed star in the same proportion would be fifteen thousand miles. Light moves at the rate of one hundred and ninety-five thousand miles in a second. From the sun it reaches us in about eight minutes; from one of the nearest fixed stars (61 Cygni) it takes ten years; from the Polar Star, fifty years; from the nebulæ perhaps five million years. Our telescopes cannot penetrate to the ends of the starry world; yet perhaps this is only one corner of the whole of creation; and all creation is no more than the ante-chamber of the divine infinity. God is greater and far beyond all this. How wonderful will be the sight of Him face to face as He is! We can never adore Him and humble ourselves enough before Him. How can creatures dare to disobey, despise, insult, deny such a God! How much will they lose by that folly and sin!

6.—THE FIFTH DAY.

I. The fifth day of Moses introduces us into new and almost unexplored realms of wonder. Animal life is here mentioned for the first time. This however was not its first commencement. Scripture indicates the infusion of the primitive germs of life on the first day; and in accordance with this, we find fossil evidence of marine life from a very early date. It would appear that the sea was amply peopled as far back as the Devonian era, many hundred thousand years before the fifth day. This is not mentioned by Moses. He speaks only of the more striking and distinct features of creation, such as would have come under the notice of a contemporary observer, such as he felt himself to be during the series of his visions. Notwithstanding the shoals of fish hidden beneath the ocean surface, and a few insects and air-breathing reptiles, this globe was still, to the eye, an unpeopled waste. Now the bright sunshine and limpid atmosphere made the earth rejoice; there was a great outburst of life, and strange new species of creatures suited to the changed conditions sprang into existence. Until a few years ago the passage in Genesis was the only record existing of a most wonderful and quite hidden episode of creation. Geology has now brought to light the skeletons of the animals that Moses saw in vision, and has corroborated every detail of his narrative. Men change, and their ideas, and their science; but the word of the Lord abides for ever. Events always justify those who walk by faith in that word. Have patience, and in due course God will give you light.

II. Our translations do not give the full force of the description of the fifth day. In the Hebrew it runs thus: "God said, Let the waters swarm with swarms of the reptile that hath the breath of life, and the fowl, etc. . . . And God created the great sea-monsters and every soul of the creature that creepeth, which the waters swarmed out after their kind, and all flying of wing after its kind"

(Gen. i. 20, 21). Here, for the only time in describing so many wonders, Moses seems to express astonishment at the enormous abundance and enormous size of the day's productions. They must be of some very unusual kinds. It used to be supposed that they were the fish and birds of our present geological epoch. But the words, taken precisely, imply something more than that; and further, it is unlikely that birds and fishes should be placed apart in the scriptural classification from the animals belonging to the same creative epoch. It is more reasonable to suppose that the works of the fifth day are widely separated in character and in their date from those of the sixth day. There are more mysteries in God's words and works than you can fathom. You see only the surface. Pray God for full intelligence. You cannot attain to it by your natural powers.

III. The modern revelation made by God in science has developed for us the brief revelation in Genesis. After the appearance of the sun, the Permian era began, followed by the Trias and Oolite. This was emphatically a period of great amphibious monsters and creeping things, of gigantic birds and strange flying creatures. The Megalosaurus was a carnivorous land animal, fifty feet long. There was a giant frog, the Labyrinthodon, tortoises twenty feet across, lizards or crocodiles with a length of sixty and seventy feet. There were birds that stood ten feet in height, and flying serpents and lizards, the pterosaurus and pterodactyl. This is the era, naturally unknown in his time, which Moses describes on his fifth day. It is totally different from ours. No species of that creation survive now; none of the mammals of our epoch existed then. That era fell at the end of the Primary and the beginning of the Secondary system. Our present fauna began in later Tertiary times and continue in the Quaternary. How wonderful is the harmony of revelation and nature, of God's words and His works! Let there be a similar harmony between your words and works, between your faith and your life.

7.—THE SIXTH DAY.

I. After the age of the reptiles, there was a long interval not marked by features sufficient to make of it an additional day of creation. The cretaceous beds average one thousand feet in thickness; they consist of the shells and skeletons of myriads of generations of minute animalculæ deposited on the bed of the ocean. After being formed and consolidated during long ages, they slowly rose, till now they form great plains, or hills and cliffs. Then followed the Tertiary epoch, when new species of animals began to appear, the forerunners of existing races, marsupials and mammals. Some of these have flourished, extended widely and become extinct. Such were the Megatherium, eighteen feet in length, the Palæotherium, a compound of rhinoceros, horse and tapir, and the Mammoth. Other species have lasted, more or less modified, into our times. The length of these periods is beyond our computation: we only know that it was enormous. Thus did God carefully, slowly, with enormous power and wisdom, prepare this world during millions of years to be your habitation. You have now to prepare your soul through countless thoughts and actions to be His dwelling.

II. Wonderful is the provision made by God in preparation for man! In every clime there are animals to help us in our work—the horse, the ass, the elephant, the camel, llama, yak. Others provide us with food and clothing—the ox, buffalo, sheep, goat. Some are domesticated to be our companions and guardians. Others are wild and fierce, like the lion, tiger, bear and wolf. Even these have important uses; they keep down the excessive multiplication of the lower animals, or maintain their standard by weeding out the inferior specimens; they exercise the strength and address of man, and furnish him with materials for

science and for occupation. Other creatures adorn the earth by their beauty or their song; and others again exhibit to us a marvellous perfection of instinct, and of adaptation to various circumstances, like the beaver and migratory birds. Even down to ants and wasps, every creature, even the most insignificant, has a part to play, and often a most important one, in carrying on the great economy of the world. Though we may at times be unable to see it, everything reflects in some way the perfections of its Maker. Be grateful to God for the extraordinary multiplicity of His benefits. Recognize His hand in all things, and employ them all in His service.

III. The final work of the sixth day was the creation of man. Traces of him are found only in the newest strata, after everything else had been completed. Man is the most perfect, most capable, most beautiful of God's creatures. He is the image and likeness of the Creator, and His representative towards the lower creation, holding full dominion over the earth, to fill it, and subdue it, and rule over rhe birds and beasts and fishes. Man touches both terms of being; in his body he is like to the animals, in his intelligence and freedom he resembles the Infinite God. He is the corner-stone which makes both into one; and in him the universe returns to the Lord who made it. The material world is summed up in man and completed in him; thenceforth evolution has passed to a higher plane, it becomes social, moral and spiritual. "So the heavens and the earth were finished and all the furniture of them" (Gen. ii. 1). What a marvellous ladder of progress to perfection from first to last! All the stages are connected, passing into one another by transitional forms, and gradually rising towards man and God. It is your duty to sum up the offices of all creatures by rendering praise and glory for them all to their Creator, and by recognizing the perfections that He manifests in them, His immensity, omnipotence, wisdom, beauty and love.

8.—THE SEVENTH DAY.

I. "On the seventh day God ended the work which He had made" (Gen. ii. 2). He ended it in the sense that He had now completely equipped the earth for the purpose that it was intended for; and thenceforth it was to work out its destiny under the guidance of man. In another sense that work is not ended; *i.e.* it has not yet fulfilled the aim and object of its being; and it will not have done so till the end of time, when all the results are summed up and the elect are gathered into eternal happiness. Then the Almighty will pass the final verdict on His work and declare that it is good. The end of the material development of this earth has come; there will be no further days of creation, no superior race of beings to succeed man. Evolution indeed goes on, but it is of a kind now that depends on man's will aided by grace, and not on God alone. It should be an evolution of truth and justice, of the knowledge of God and the perfecting of His likeness in the soul. As this depends on the good-will of man, the result is various: in one line there goes on a development towards eternal life, but there is also an alternative line of deterioration. Each man chooses for himself which he will. In depends on you now to carry on the work of God in your own soul and in others. Go on constantly till you have finished your portion of the task. Imitate the regularity and thoroughness of God, so that He may be able to declare that you and your work are very good.

II. "God rested on the seventh day from all the work which He had done" (Gen. ii. 2). This does not mean that there was any change in God from activity to non-activity, nor that He retired from His creation and left it thenceforward to itself. God is immutable, and there is not in Him, as in us, a change from striving after something deficient, to the fruition that follows attainment. God is

always in a state of peace, repose, attainment: at the same time He is always perfect activity; according to the word of Our Lord, "My Father worketh until now, and I work" (John v. 17). The beginning and the ceasing, the change from work to repose, were in the temporal operation of God upon His creatures, and not in Himself. The repose, as spoken of God, was symbolical. Learn to unite in yourself activity and repose. Work unceasingly for God, but work peacefully without excitement or anxiety. Employ all your energies, but do not trouble yourself about success or failure. Leave the results to Him "who giveth the increase." Be content to have done your allotted task; and then, whatever happens, you have done God's will, and your work cannot be called a failure.

III. "God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it" (Gen. ii. 3). The divine action is the rule of ours. We require alternations of activity and rest. The history of creation has been so arranged in Holy Scripture as to point out the due proportions of the two states, and to give a new sanction to the custom and to the division of time already existing. Our physical need of rest coincides with our spiritual need for a season which we may devote to worship and religious meditation. These needs are consecrated and secured to mankind by the symbolical rest of the Creator on the seventh day. Thus God, having supreme repose in Himself, becomes the source of repose for men. Labour is necessary that we may enjoy repose. Repose is necessary that we may be able to labour. God must be the rule of both. Without God, the turmoil of life is so absorbing that it exhausts our energies and destroys us before our time. Without God, repose becomes depravity, and recreation a fierce excitement. The world requires more restfulness, of mind, of heart, and of body. A dominant sense of religion is the only agent that can impart the repose so necessary for wholesome living. God will give you this at present, and a Sabbath of eternal rest in Him hereafter.

9.—MYSTICAL SENSES OF THE SEVEN DAYS.

I. The operations of God in the seven epochs of creation are a figure of His spiritual operations in the human race. The chaos of the first day and its darkness represent the state of mankind before the giving of the Jewish dispensation. There was no religious organization, and depravity was universal. The first dim light of that day is the law of nature, called by David the light of God's countenance (Ps. iv. 7). The creation of the firmament and separation of the waters is the segregation of the people of Israel from the Gentiles; for waters signify people (Apoc. xvii. 15). The rising of the dry land and its covering with vegetation are the rise of the Jewish nation into prominence, and its adornment with the holy lives of its heroes. The sun is Our Lord Jesus Christ; the moon and planets which reflect Him are the Blessed Virgin, the Church, and the Saints. The production of life from the waters is a figure of the new birth from the waters of Baptism. The different creatures of the fifth and sixth days are the souls which soar aloft to heaven like the birds, those which remain of the earth earthy, those which grovel in the slime like the reptiles, and the wild beasts are Antichrist and other persecutors. All of these are subdued by the Man made in the image of God, Jesus Christ His Son. The Sabbath is our final rest in heaven. Praise God for all the wonderful works of this mystical creation.

II. The days of creation also represent the operations of God in the Blessed Virgin, by which He prepared her for the advent of the first-born of mankind, her divine Son. The heaven and earth covered with darkness are Saints Joachim and Anne enduring the shame of sterility before the birth of their blessed daughter. Her birth is the foregleam and promise of the perfect light of the Redemption. The firmament raised above the earth is the high grace accorded to her, which raised her above all creatures in

sanctity. The waters of the earth gathered into one place and forming the seas (Maria) represent the accumulation in her of all the graces of the saints; and the foliage and flowers are her abundant virtues. The sun and moon are emblems of her burning love of God, and of the faith which shone bright during all the darkness of the Passion; the stars are the celestial emotions of her heart. The beauty of the animals and birds that peopled the earth represents the harmony and sweetness of her life and words. The creation of Adam is the figure of Our Lord's Incarnation, and the Sabbath is His repose and joy in the only creature worthy to receive Him. "He that made me rested in my tabernacle" (Eccli. xxiv. 12). Glorify God for this wonderful series of His great works.

III. The works of the seven days further prefigure the sanctification of individual souls. Our first state is an abyss of darkness and disorder, but the Spirit of the Lord hovers over us, and sheds upon us the first rays of light and grace. The firmament of the second day is the firm assurance of pardon, rising from the chaos of sin. The gathering apart of land and water is the removal of our sins from us by repentance; the plants are the fruits of virtue which we bring forth. The sun, moon and stars are the light of the knowledge of holy truths, which only come home to us after we have abandoned our sins. The birds are our souls rising swiftly from the waters of devotion towards God; the beasts and serpents are our evil passions subdued to the yoke of reason and grace. We then become perfect men, formed in the image of Christ; and the repose of the Sabbath is that tranquillity and peace with which God rewards those who welcome and promote His spiritual operations in their souls. God is now carrying on this spiritual creation within you. His graces are progressive and each one leads on to others. Take care to accept each degree of light and grace, and act upon it, and thus you will come at last to perfect peace.

10.—MAN. HIS BODY AND SOUL.

I. There are two substances of which all creation consists, matter and spirit. They form two diverse and apparently incompatible worlds; but in man they are united. The human body is of the earth, but is the most perfect of earthly productions. It stands upright, as if facing God and asserting its dominion over the rest of creation. The brain and nervous system are far more perfect than in other animals. The hand is a marvel of adaptability, and has been the instrument of human progress; the horse's hoof, the fish's fin, the end of the bird's wing are similar in structure, but how different in their capacity for use. The bones, the veins, the internal mechanism of heart and lungs, everything in fact is of the highest degree of elaboration. Much more beautiful than the bodily frame is the countenance, when it is the index of a pure and benevolent mind. Matter is glorified by being made part of the substance of those who are images of God. Above all, the human body was glorified by being united to the Divinity, when the Son of God took our nature from the most blessed of the daughters of Adam. Thus even your body is worthy of admiration and reverence. Remember its dignity, and never let it be the abode of sin and Satan. Maintain it in the divine likeness, and as the Apostle says: "Glorify and bear God in your body" (1 Cor. vi. 20).

II. Much more noble and splendid is the soul. It is not of the earth, for God "breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul" (Gen. ii. 7). The soul partakes of the qualities of the angels, and even of the eternal God; it has powers that do not belong to matter; it is a spirit, it is immortal, it is intelligent, it is free and master of itself. What God is in the world, that the soul is in the body; it is in every part at once and entirely; it gives life and action to the body, and maintains unity in its parts and

harmony in its functions. It directs the physical powers and senses of the body, and gives them their efficiency. It is the rational soul which imparts to the features their expressiveness, dignity and beauty. Without the soul and life, the body is a repulsive object; more repulsive still are those animals which are nearest to man in structure. They have life but no soul; most repulsive of all is the man who possesses both life and soul, and whose soul is disordered by mania or sinful excesses. Your soul is more than your body, your spiritual life more than earthly life. Your perfection as man, and well-being in time and eternity depend on the dominance of virtue over pleasure, faith over worldliness, grace over nature.

III. These two elements, matter and spirit, have been brought by God into a wonderful union in man. It would have seemed impossible (had God not done it) to combine the material and the intellectual into one being, and to raise brute matter into union with the infinite, unconditioned, divine Spirit. But man becomes the link which joins the two halves of the chain of being. The dust of the earth becomes organic in the substance of a plant; thence it becomes the food of man, is changed into blood and brain, and becomes associated with his thought. Man in turn is incorporated with God in the Incarnation, in the reception of the Blessed Sacrament, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and by his transformation in glory. Thus through Him "the creature also itself shall be delivered from the servitude of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God" (Rom. viii. 21). In man the unconscious material universe returns upon God, its first source, and renders Him a "reasonable service." "Honour the Lord with thy substance" (Prov. iii. 9). Render Him a double service according to the double element in your nature; not externally only nor internally only; but a service of faith and works, of inward adoration and outward profession, of prayer, fasting and almsdeeds.

II.—THE IMAGE OF GOD IN MAN.

I. Everything that is exhibits the impress of its maker or its origin. A building, a picture, a poem, a piece of mechanism, speaks of the epoch and nationality of the author, his intelligence, the object he had in view, his moral character perhaps; for his ideas are enshrined in it. The nature and qualities of God are necessarily reflected to a considerable extent in the multiform universe that He has made. It possesses good order, beauty, utility, grandeur, etc., and it reveals the existence of its Author, His immensity, eternity, omnipotence, goodness, wisdom. Much more is this the case with man. God says, "Let Us make man," and not, "Let man be," as He said of light; as if man were the special work of His hand; and He adds, "in Our own image and likeness." Elsewhere we see the vestiges of God in creation; in man we see His living portrait. What dignity and splendour there must be in man when, in addition to the natural resemblance, he has acquired by virtue and grace the likeness to God's most exalted perfections! But the higher and nobler a creature is, so much the more degrading and noxious is any serious deficiency. The absence of reason makes the baboon so loathsome because he stands so close to man. So it is with the image of God when the moral and spiritual likeness has been obliterated. The sinner is an unclean caricature of the Most Holy, a living blasphemy, the most noxious irregularity in creation.

II. Man is like to God as possessing in an eminent way all kinds of life that are found in creation: he has the vegetative life, which is perfected by sensation into the animal life, and this is ennobled by the addition of the rational life. Thus there is in man a triple life that represents the Blessed Trinity. Man resembles God also in the supremacy which he exercises over the material world. He is made lord of all things in order to guide them beneficently as God does, and to establish a divine kingdom among them. All crea-

tures look to man as their master; and, not knowing God, they serve Him in that representation of Him which they see. Further, man is spiritual; he possesses a soul which can live apart from the body. The soul thinks, it can originate new ideas from itself, and so has a sort of creative force; it possesses will, and by its decree gives outward form and expression to the ideas. Thus man is doubly creative. By exercising these great powers as God directs, man may become vicegerent of God, an incarnation of the providence, the power, the wisdom, the beneficence of God, and effective ruler of the world. Disobeying God, man loses the resemblance to Him, and with it he loses in great measure his natural mastery over things temporal.

III. There are further kinds of resemblance to God which depend on our own efforts, with His grace. There is the moral likeness, by which we imitate the perfection of virtues in God. This is most admirable and beautiful, even when carried out in a merely natural way, imperfect as it then necessarily is. Far and away beyond this is the life of supernatural virtue, whereby God dwells in us, and infuses a facility for more splendid virtues than our natural faculties can attain. By this "the life of Jesus is made manifest in our mortal flesh" (2 Cor. iv. 11); and through its various degrees we may rise to the full perfection of the divine likeness that is possible on earth. But there is a more perfect resemblance still, which will be accomplished only in heaven. "We all, beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Cor. iii. 18). This is the true line of human evolution, perfecting the likeness of God from the natural order through the moral and supernatural, until we arrive at the life of heaven. If the mere vestiges of God in creation are so splendid, and so full of absorbing interest, if the natural man is so far superior to the material world, how magnificent must our souls be when in the state of grace, and when they are made perfect in glory!

12.—THE IMMORTALITY OF MAN.

I. "God created man incorruptible" (Wisd. ii. 23). It is a great wonder and a great privilege that one of the creatures of this material transient universe should be raised to immortality. This is the crown of the highest creature. Nothing more could be given than immortality of supernatural life with God. As man is raised to this, he is evidently the last term of creation; nothing higher remains to be evolved. The soul is bestowed directly by God on man; He "breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul" (Gen. ii. 7). This alone can account for the rational soul; for everything must have an adequate cause; life can proceed only from life, as science tells us; so intelligence can proceed only from intelligence. Matter can no more generate mind than the inorganic can generate organic life. As one modification always produces others, (by the law of *correlation of parts*), so the special mode of communication of the soul involves the further likeness to God of the soul being separable from this body and immortal. The immortality of man brings the whole of being into relation in one great chain. Without this the universe would be a mere by-product, with no sufficient *raison d'être,* ending in nothing as it began in nothing. The obvious gap in the series of existence, the obvious need of an immortal class of creatures, proves that such a class must exist. Thank God for raising you to such dignity.

II. Man's aptitude for immortality and craving for it prove that he possesses it; for it is a law of biology that no healthy appetite exists without there being provision for its satisfaction. Nothing less than immortality can satisfy the demands of human nature. None are fully satisfied with this life; all are disappointed; none have had their fill, few have had their fair share. Our capacities are beyond all

that is given to them here. If this life were all, our desires, by all analogy, would be amply satisfied with what it contains. So it is with the animals; they aspire to no more, they are fit for no more, and they get no more than this world affords. But man! However much he has, he always looks for more; for more of knowledge, of truth, of love, of friendship, of justice, of goodness, of enjoyment, of activity; and among the more highly developed of mankind there is the craving for the Infinite God Himself. Without immortality to complete us, the most successful life on earth would be no more than a miserable failure—a mocking cruelty, an insoluble enigma. The Christian hope alone explains all things and satisfies us.

III. In nature, though all decays, no single atom or energy ever perishes: they are conserved, transmuted, and transmitted for millions of years without loss. Man dies: *i.e.* his body ceases to act, and is separated into its components, which enter into new combinations. But there is in him a force, a source of force, even a creative force, higher in kind than all the cosmic forces. An energy so noble must be more than the sun's rays, which fell upon this earth millions of years ago, and which remain locked-up in the coal-beds till brought forth by us to start on a new course of active energy. The soul must endure in a better way than the particles of its subject body, which continue with all their chemical and molecular energies for ever. It cannot be that the noblest element in the universe is the only one to perish at once and utterly. All nature returns to God in man. The forces of this earth are concentrated on the support and development of man, sustaining the body while the soul works out its destiny. Physical energies subserve intellectual energies, and they in turn are the material of the spiritual energy which rises to its completion in God. The results of all creation will abide for ever in that transmuted form. All here passes, but not unprofitably. It will never be as if the world had never been.

13.—UNITY AND VARIETY IN THE SOUL.

I. The soul is like to God in its unity. As God is one in the Trinity of Persons, as Our Lord Jesus Christ possesses a supreme unity in His two natures, the divine and the human, so the soul of man has a supreme unity. The soul is one, as being a spirit, a simple, uncompounded, indivisible substance. It is not composed of different chemical elements or of different atoms like the body; so its unity cannot be broken by decomposition and death. The soul is conscious of the different and contradictory impulses which proceed from the flesh and the reason, from nature and grace, but these do not constitute two souls or two personalities. It is one and the same spirit that exercises the different classes of vital functions, thinking, determining, remembering. It is ultimately one and the same principle which receives impressions through different senses, and puts the different members of the body into action. The soul, although different in its character and origin from the body, yet coalesces into an extraordinary unity with it, forming one person with one activity and one responsibility. Remember that your soul is one and your only one. Its life here is its one and only probation while it is in union with the body. Your unending future depends on your one present life, and the result can never afterwards be changed. Pray earnestly: "Deliver, O God, my soul from the sword, my only one from the hand of the dog" (Ps. xxi. 21).

II. In resemblance to the Divine Trinity, the one soul of man manifests itself in different ways and has a number of attributes. It is the centre, first, of a threefold life—the vegetative, the animal, the rational. The vegetative or simple organic life is that which accomplishes the functions of the lowest class of living beings, the plants. This is the

life of things which grow by the assimilation of substances taken into the system, and not, as rocks or earth, by external accretion of other substance on their surface. They multiply their own substance and reproduce their life in other individuals. The sentient or animal life is that by which man receives impressions through the senses and nerves from the objects that surround him, becomes conscious of them, and sends back an impulse from the brain to the members in response. By the rational life, man, in addition to feeling these impressions, can reflect on them, revive them, balance them, and make his selection of the action which is to follow them. Under each one of these classes of operation are included a number of subsidiary powers and senses. God has made you in a wonderful manner. Thank Him for this, and consider all these faculties as so many ways of glorifying Him and working out your salvation.

III. The powers of the rational soul are again triple—the understanding, the memory, and the will. The understanding has a universal scope; it is content with nothing less than all knowledge, and aspires even to the knowledge of the Infinite. It has a marvellous acuteness for investigating, conjecturing, discovering the most recondite truths. The functions of memory store up past sensations and knowledge in immense number and variety, ready to be brought forth into use at desire. The will has an absolute mastery, and God Himself does not dispute its supremacy. It has the power of determining between the different impulses, and assigning the predominance to one impression over another, and of adhering to one object rather than another. These great faculties must be carefully exercised and controlled, and must not be indulged but trained. God has appointed certain limits to their use, and wishes them to be employed not for our gratification, but for His service. In the next world they will attain their fullest activity and satisfaction.

14.—THE LIBERTY OF THE SOUL.

I. The autonomy of man, the freedom of his will, is a most valuable and noble prerogative. "God made man from the beginning and left him in the hand of his own counsel" (Eccli. xv. 14). Intelligence and freedom go together. Each involves the other. Intelligence without liberty to carry out its conclusions is an incompleteness, a violence, a state of slavery. To speak of freedom without the power of understanding and balancing the alternatives of choice is a contradiction in terms. Man therefore possesses absolute control within himself; none can interfere with this, even though a man may be prevented by his weakness or by external force from carrying his will into effect. This dignity is valued beyond all others; and there are very few who are not ready to sacrifice almost every other advantage in order to retain the fulness of their freedom. The possession of this is enough to raise man high above the level of the material universe, and to make him, insignificant as he may be in bulk and strength, a nobler being than the most brilliant of the fixed stars. This does not mean that you are irresponsible, but that you have so much a stricter account to render. It gives you the power to do as you like, but not the right as against God. It does not mean that you may act without restraint, but that the restraint must come from yourself. Use your freedom accordingly.

II. As the possession of freedom raises man so high among creatures, making him like to God in a most important respect; so it gives an immense value and an immense power to human actions. As the rational soul is a nobler being than the great orb of the sun, so all the energies of the celestial bodies throughout space are not equal in value to one act of human worship and love. The service of our souls is then the highest in kind that creation can return to

its Maker. On the other hand, the disobedience of a rational and free being possesses a corresponding enormity of malice. There is nothing so evil as to turn these great powers against Him from whom they are derived. One venial sin is a greater blot in the universe than the collapse and destruction of a solar system. Actions of such enormous import must have tremendous consequences for good or evil. Do not think that a transient deed of virtue or vice is not proportioned to these great results. That deed is the expression of the supreme determination of the autocratic human will in favour of Supreme Goodness or in revolt against it. Sin is then the supreme evil, and it must have corresponding consequences. All the miseries of the world are the result of revolt against religion and moral law.

III. The exercise of liberty in serving God implies a choice between two alternatives. There must be power to disobey as well as to obey. To keep the law when there is no power to transgress, is but a mechanical act and not an act of virtue. We must have the option between good and evil; and the choice of evil involves the consequences of evil—misery and hell. If God were to make these impossible, it could only be by making us unable to sin, *i.e.* it would be at the expense of our liberty. And what would this involve? Absolute freedom of will is the basis of merit and reward. There is no dignity in a reward that is not earned, or that is given for unintelligent indeliberate service; on the contrary the higher such a reward is, the more unmeaning it becomes, and the more discreditable to giver and receiver. Without full liberty men of good-will would lose all opportunities of sacrifice, generosity, heroism and victory. Those of evil-will would esteem it no favour for God to limit their freedom for the sake of forcing on them a benefit that they do not want. They would be the first to denounce such beneficence as tyranny. Your liberty is a terrible gift. Its advantages are infinite, and, unless you use it well, its disadvantages may be infinite too.

15.—THE ENDOWMENTS OF ADAM.

I. The works of God are perfect for their purposes, and so too must have been the crowning work for the sake of which all else had been made. Man is wonderful compared with the rest of beings; especially wonderful are the great heroes of humanity. We see man now under the influence of the great calamity, and of thousands of years of accumulated corruption. Unfallen man would be vastly superior to the best as known to us. Further, God fits everything for its providential duties. The first of men held a unique position as founder of the race, as first legislator and prophet, who had to mould his progeny and equip them with truth and principles of conduct, who was to set his mark upon them to last for ever. He required more brilliant endowments than any other great men who have influenced their race, like Abraham, Moses, the Apostles, great conquerors and philosophers and artists. In his first state he must have been a man of power and grandeur unequalled, inferior only to Him who carried out the frustrated task as the "Second Adam," and to His ever blessed and immaculate Mother. Therefore "God clothed him with strength according to Himself. . . . He created in them the science of the spirit, He filled their hearts with wisdom" (Eccli. xvii. 2, 6). God has assigned great spiritual duties of some kind to you, and has equipped you accordingly. See that you do not fall from that grace, and prove unfaithful to your vocation.

II. As to his bodily endowments Adam must have been perfect and complete. As the object of God's special care, and the work of His hand more directly than the rest of creatures, as the likeness and manifestation of God to the world and to the angels, as the king and ruler over God's

earthly kingdom, we must expect him to have been perfect in beauty, in strength, in health, in all bodily capacities, as he proceeded from the hand of the Creator. Besides his natural gifts he possessed an additional bodily gift beyond what he was entitled to. As being material and compounded, his body was transient, subject to decay, and mortal, like all other creatures. But this body, in order that it might be in harmony with the soul divinely breathed into it and raised to the supernatural life, was endowed with the gift of immortality, and immunity from disease and suffering. This was communicated through the soul, and depended on the maintenance of its supernatural efficiency. With us, too, the restored supernatural life of the soul has a strange, strong influence on our bodies, and on the whole course of our life as individuals and as a society.

III. In his mind, too, Adam must have been magnificently endowed. As yet he was not clouded, blinded, corrupted by sin ; there was no antagonism to truth in him, no prejudice. Whatever was wanting to him in the way of observation and accumulation of knowledge, was supplied by his continual converse with God, face to face, as a man speaks with his friend. Over all, there was the perfection which comes from sanctifying grace and the presence of God in the soul. Adam was in the state of innocence and of original justice, and had the infused habits of faith, hope, charity and all other virtues. His faculties and powers were so balanced that they did not conflict with one another, but worked together in harmony. No antagonism of impulses arose from the association of the material flesh with the reasonable soul. Grace guided reason, reason ruled the senses and appetites, and the whole being was subject to the divine will. Here were all the conditions of peace, progress, virtue and happiness. If you subordinate yourself to God, if you subdue the body and regulate the mind, you will escape from many of the consequences of original sin and enjoy an anticipated beatitude.

16.—THE GARDEN OF EDEN.

I. In forming this globe, God had prepared a suitable spot for the abode of Adam and the cradle of the human race. It was a garden of delights, abounding in all that was necessary for man's simple wants, providing him with occupation for his faculties, and, we may be sure, more lovely than the loveliest spots that charm us now in this world of our trial and punishment. At this stage the earth was fully under the dominion of man, serving him without resistance to his efforts. "The Lord God had planted a paradise of pleasure from the beginning, wherein He placed man whom He had formed . . . to dress it and keep it" (Gen. ii. 8, 15). Hence we learn that idleness is not the lot of man even in beatitude. There is a curse upon our labour, but labour itself is a necessity for our good estate of body and mind, for our advance and happiness. In this we may see a figure of Our Lord's Incarnation in the "Garden enclosed" (Cant. iv. 12) where He placed His tabernacle. It was an Eden of grace and delight, and it endured but a short time. Jesus had to go forth in consequence of sin to labour in the sweat of His brow and struggle with the thorns and thistles of human perversity. In His Church God has provided a garden of Eden for you, full of all necessaries and delights, with the tree of life in the midst thereof. Outside there prevail doctrinal difficulty, moral failure, deficiency of grace, frustration of well-meant effort.

II. Next we find Adam led by God to contemplate the wonders of creation, to show his supremacy over it, and to exercise his intelligence by naming things in accordance with their characters. "The Lord God having formed the beasts and fowls brought them to Adam to see what he would call them; for whatsoever Adam called any living creature the same is its name" (Gen. ii. 19). Like the earth, all animals were then peacefully subject to the dominion of man, in virtue of the supremacy of his soul and its

subjection to God's authority. So now with us: absolute conformity to the divine law is the key to our complete mastery over ourselves and over the accidents of life. "To serve Him is to reign." We may also remember that the whole human race passed before the eyes of Our Lord, especially in the agony of Gethsemani, to see what name He would call them. He saw our lives and deeds. He recognized some as His sheep and lambs, doves of innocence, or eagles who rise to the heights of divine contemplation; also wolves who rend the flock, and foul birds of night that delight in carrion and in deeds of darkness. See where you will place yourself; according to that, He names you.

III. Adam, as being the crown of God's work, was necessarily complete and perfect in himself. Yet there was more required. He observed that amongst all creatures "there was not found a helper like himself" (Gen. ii. 20). He was alone; and the law of intelligent beings is society and not solitude. As in the Trinity, so there needed to be multiplicity as well as unity in the human image of God. In some wonderful way, therefore, God effected the separation of the sexes. He produced a second person from the first, and from these a third term, the completion and the bond of the primary human society. So is the family bound together in the unity of Matrimony, and the whole human race in unity of origin. Here is an emblem of the Church, the spouse of Christ, proceeding from the wounded side of the second Adam when He slept the sleep of death upon the cross; and from this union of Christ and His Church proceeds the spiritual life of mankind, who are born again in baptism. That holy spouse is separated from the world to be inseparably united with Christ, never to fall away or be supplanted by another. Only her children are recognized by Him as His. You are a child of that union. You help to form one term of that trinity, whereof Jesus Christ is the first, and the Church the second term. It is a mystical but most real relationship.

17.—THE FORBIDDEN FRUIT.

I. We never know the worth of a thing till it is tested. Gold must be tried by fire, the free agent by temptation or trial. For his own interest, for his glory and reward, man needs to go through the furnace. It would not be worthy of God or of man that God should glorify him without his own concurrence and merit. For friendship and love there must be reciprocity. How grand it is to be able to say, "Behold we have left all things and have followed Thee" (Matt. xix. 27); or again: "I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. iv. 7). As the angels had to be proved, so Adam. His functions were very high. Nobility of character, unswerving loyalty, blind trustfulness in his Father and Lord, strength, perseverance, were necessary for his position. It had to be seen whether he was worthy of holding in fee the estate of grace and the title of son of God, and capable of administering it for his descendants, and transmitting it to them as an inheritance. He had to make the choice between the supernatural and the natural plane of existence. You, too, have to be tested and to prove your worth. Rejoice in the severity of your trial; it is not to be regarded as a danger and a misery, but as an opportunity for heroism, and the price of an eternal reward.

II. In the centre of Eden were two mysterious symbols, the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Adam already knew all that was good; evil he did not know, for God had made nothing evil. Evil is privation; here it meant privation of supernatural life, or the fall to the state of natural life and endowments. In this was involved death; of soul first, then of body. "Of the tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat. For in what day soever thou shalt eat of it thou shalt surely die the death" (Gen. ii. 17). The trial was physical in form, the symbol of an

intellectual and moral test in reality. The two trees were the outward sign of a sacred covenant between the Almighty and His creatures. The one represented the higher life that was offered to man; the other symbolized the natural domain that had been placed under man's control; from a portion of this Adam had to refrain as a token of submission to God, of trust in His word, of faith without sight. There was a triple restraint; of the sense of dominion, of desire for knowledge, of sensible enjoyment; which corresponded to the triple concupiscence let loose by the sin. Obedience meant the choosing of supernatural life in dependence on God, instead of the full natural life with its consequences. To eat of this tree of full but guilty knowledge was incompatible with the higher life. To us also, separately or in nations, the choice is proposed between the supernatural and the natural, between good and evil.

III. The consequences of Adam's trial were naturally most momentous. It was not a test of his personal fitness for grace, but of his fitness to act as head of the human race, to be the source of a stream of supernatural influence which would descend to the remotest generation. If he could not hold his principality for himself, still less could he transmit it. Not only his blood, but much of his character would pass to his children, and in particular his great supernatural privilege. Forfeiting that, he could bequeath neither the privilege itself, nor the fitness to hold it, nor the strength to maintain it. Neither he nor his children could eat of the tree of life; they were subject thenceforth to bodily death, and to that privation of grace which is the essential constituent of the stain of sin. To remedy this, the second Adam had to ascend the cross, the tree of His bodily death, and change it thereby into a tree of life for us; He restores it then to us, not by carnal generation and inheritance, but by the spiritual birth through water and the Holy Ghost in baptism. Thank Him for thus remedying the infidelity of your first father and your own.

18.—THE TEMPTER.

I. All progress arises from the conflict of contraries. Our bodily life goes on by means of continual exhaustion and reparation, growth and decay. Death is as necessary as life for the continual advance of the universe. The free-will of creatures originated a force opposed to supreme goodness in God. These two forces, good and evil, are engaged in a continual struggle with one another. They are like the centrifugal and centripetal forces, and between them they produce equilibrium and progress. The human soul and the human race are the battlefield of the two forces, and our free-will decides which shall predominate. The eternal conflict begun in heaven continues on earth, and it necessarily found its place in the happy abode of our first parents. They also could not be crowned without striving lawfully (2 Tim. ii. 5); and their striving took the form of being tempted by the spirits of evil. The simple account given in Genesis is most true to nature, true to all our experiences, true to the facts of the history of mankind. The wisdom and goodness of God permitted it; and in spite of certain evil consequences, He is able to draw from it a greater good. Even evil becomes subordinate to good, and you may gain greater profit from the very fact of your losses.

II. The evil we have to contend with is not merely in our own nature and in the world. The Apostle tells us that "our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against . . . the spirits of wickedness in the high places (Eph. vi. 12). The great forces of evil are concentrated in these angels who fell from their principality. Their perverted will hates goodness and loves evil. All their faculties are turned against God and His interests. Their only pleasure, so far as they can be said to have any pleasure, is found in thwarting the divine will, and causing sin and misery. Their hatred of God extends to men who are

made in His likeness, and who are to possess the glory which they failed to secure. God does not stop them any more than the tides of the ocean; He allows free-will to have its full play in every being, and He does not interfere by violence or miracle to destroy the faculties that He has given. The fallen angels remain active in the universe; and, as every particle of matter acts upon every other particle, so spiritual intelligences are for ever able to act on one another. Satan then is our tempter, and he was the tempter of Adam. We have a source of temptation in our natural perversity, but Adam was free from this. His temptation could come from an external suggestion alone. Hence it was that "by the envy of the devil death came into the world" (Wisd. ii. 24). Pray God for strength to resist these terrible enemies of your salvation.

III. At the first mention of Satan in the Bible he is called the serpent. This name is not used again till the last book (Apoc. xx.). It is a most suitable figure; for the serpent is insidious; his movements are swift and hard to detect, he strikes suddenly, and his venom is fatal. So is the action of Satan in temptation. Some have supposed that he suggested the temptation invisibly to the mind of Eve, as he does to us: but it is more usually believed that he appeared in some visible form, as he did when the time came for the second Adam in turn to be tempted. God conversed with Adam in some visible shape; the angels, too, appeared in human form to men in early days; and it may well have been that this other spirit appeared visibly and spoke audibly. It may have been that he actually assumed the form of a serpent, so as to overthrow the rival to his throne under the guise of the lowest of creatures, in revenge for his own subjection to God under the lower form of a man. You are subject to the attacks of the "old serpent," but Our Lord covers you with His protection. In His name you will be able to cast out devils, to take up serpents, and to go unharmed by their poison (Mark xvi. 17).

19.—THE TEMPTATION AND FALL.

I. The temptation of our first parents was connected with the two mysterious trees of Paradise. The enemy hastened to induce the first of men to reject the supernatural and choose the natural order, as the first of angels had done; he tempted them to eat of the tree of knowledge so that they might be unfit to eat of the tree of life. He approached the woman as being the weaker, hoping to use her influence to overcome the caution and strength of the man. The first word of temptation was, "Why has God given this prohibition?" It was the suggestion of doubt. To question authority is more than half-way towards setting it aside. Eve should have recognized that God's commands are not to be questioned, His reasons not to be demanded. If He commands or reveals to us, His word is enough; we should trust Him sufficiently to accept it without explanation. Eve listened and argued. This prepared the way; she was not shocked or indignant when Satan blasphemed against the veracity of God and declared "You shall not die." He imputes base motives to the All-Holy, the desire to deprive His creatures of their rights, and keep them in undue subjection. He promises great power and happiness as the reward of sin: "You shall be as gods." These are the ordinary stages of temptation, the ordinary motives placed before men to make temptation seem plausible. Many are deceived. They take one false step, and this originates a long series of evils.

II. Eve listened, parleyed with the tempter, and trusted the bold assertions of this unknown being, instead of the word of God, whom she knew, and whose goodness she had experienced. Gradually faith, trust, love of God, and the power of grace were weakened within her. She doubted God's goodness, suspected Him of jealousy lest Adam and she should rise to equality with Him. She coveted more than

God had given her, desiring forbidden knowledge, a dangerous independence, an impossible dignity. She entertained the suggestions of base ingratitude against her benefactor, of breaking away from His authority and making herself His equal, His rival, His enemy. There was also the sensual desire of the forbidden fruit: "the tree was good to eat, and fair to the eyes, and delightful to behold; and she took of the fruit thereof and did eat" (Gen. iii. 6). Thus does sin begin unperceived, develop with rapidity, and culminate in some fatal enormity. Be watchful of its commencements; if you yield a little, you are led on till return becomes almost impossible.

III. Satan did not tempt Adam. A direct assault would probably have failed on account of the greater strength, knowledge and responsibility of Adam. A human instrument was more efficient for evil than the prince of darkness himself. It was enough to have planted the germ of evil in the heart of Eve; its own malefic energy did the rest. The woman approached her husband, and induced him to violate the solemn compact, and revolt against God, by participating in the act which involved the rejection of supernatural life and the choice of the natural alone. Adam may possibly have allowed himself to be entrapped into believing the words of the tempter, or he may have been gained by persuasion, or it may be that, out of fatal affection, he resolved to bear the burthen of sin equally with his spouse. Whatever his motive, the sin was deliberate, it was inexcusable; he had full power to resist; and he accepted the full consequences. Adam's sin was the Original Sin, and not Eve's, for he and not she was the source and head of the human race. He chose for his race the state of pure nature without God, but they fell below it. All the natural faculties were injured in the wrench that tore out the all-pervading supernatural life. How much harm may be done by one human agent of Satan! You are the instrument for good or evil of a much greater power than yourself.

20.—AFTER THE FALL.

I. "And the eyes of both of them were opened" (Gen. iii. 7). This was what Satan had promised and Adam and Eve had desired, but it was different from what they expected. Their eyes were opened in disillusion. They found themselves deceived, fooled, robbed of their most precious possession. Peace, tranquillity, enjoyment were gone; anxiety and bitter remorse had succeeded. They had not taken their place in the sinless sphere of lower creatures; that sphere was adequate for the animal world, but not for rational beings that had once been supernatural. Their natural faculties, sufficient for life in the lower sphere had they never been raised above it, were insufficient under the blighting influence of sin. There was little satisfaction in their new independence, for they now felt how necessary to their life was the dominion of God. First of all they were conscious of shame; their fearlessness and confidence were gone; they felt unfit to be seen by God or by one another. There was turmoil in their souls, an insurgence of the inferior and the animal against the higher and rational element. They had fallen under the degrading dominion of sense which had been their slave; for their mastery had been ensured by their subjection to God. So it always is. Sin promises much, but it is never really profitable. Its boasted revelations amount only to disillusion, disappointment, failure, and shame.

II. A second new feeling was a dread of God and desire to escape from His presence. When He appeared, Adam and Eve fled to the depths of the thicket. The unchangeable God was still their Father and loved them, but they could not feel themselves to be His children. Previously on terms of familiarity with the Infinite and delighting in His revelations, now they were ill at ease before Him. Their sense of guilt changed Him in their eyes to a Judge and Master, a God of wrath and terrors, far removed above

them. This sense was transmitted to their progeny, and dominated them till God the Son came in the flesh and restored the old relations of man towards his Maker. This is the usual effect of sin. It turns men against religion, virtue, and truth. It does not so much alienate God as alienate the sinner from Him. His beauty becomes a terror, His holiness an irritation, His goodness hateful. This is the cause of the eternal separation in the next world. The society of the devils is less uncongenial and less tormenting to the sinner than the society of the blessed and the sight of the divine glory. Flee from sin as from a basilisk.

III. The answers of Adam and Eve to God are evidence of their rapid and complete moral deterioration. There is no honest contrition, no spontaneous sorrow for their offence against their Benefactor, such as might be expected to arise if their sin had been one of surprise and weakness, and if they had suddenly realized its enormity. On the contrary, there is sullen and futile excuse, as of those who are hardened and will not admit their guilt, and who seek to deceive God. They explain their flight from God as being shame at their nakedness, ignoring the evil deed which was the cause of their shame. Then Adam tries to shift the blame from himself, and cast it on the weaker one, and even on God Himself. "The woman whom Thou gavest me" tempted him, he says. Eve too has no sorrow; it is not she who is to blame, she says, but the tempter. All this shows depravation of character, consciousness of deliberate hostility to God, and a hardening of their hearts. Such parents could no more generate a spiritually perfect race, than consumptives, lepers, or idiots, a vigorous, healthy offspring. Our first parents accordingly transmitted to us an inhability for the higher life they had rejected; or, in other words, the state of sin. All deliberate sins, especially the first ones, lower the moral level of a man, degrade him, and make him incapable, more or less, of taking high views and fulfilling the nobler duties of life.

21.—THE TRIPLE SENTENCE.

I. In the divine order called Nature the effect follows rigidly on the cause, and is proportioned to it; for the sequence amounts to a transmutation of energy from one form to another. It is the same in the higher divine order, the supernatural. Sin is a negative energy, a destructive force: its effect, that is, its punishment, is proportioned to the amount of supernatural energy which sin has neutralized. The three maledictions pronounced by God are prophetic indications of the course of events necessarily consequent on the sin of Adam and Eve. First, God addresses Satan and describes the future in metaphors appropriate to the form which he had, either literally or figuratively, appeared in. He shall be accursed for ever, a cause of death and an object of horror like his reptile type. He shall crawl in snake-like fashion, and shall "eat dirt" (in oriental language), shall grovel in moral baseness and the uncleanness of his temptings of man to sensuality. A second Eve shall arise, who will avenge the fall of her mother by crushing the head of her tempter, in the fact of bearing a divine Son in her virginity. Pay homage to the most blessed Virgin. Great must be her dignity and her power over Satan, since she is mentioned by God on this portentous occasion. Her victory makes her the glory of the human race.

II. God proclaims to Eve the consequence of her act in choosing the natural plane of life instead of the supernatural, and sacrificing the fruit of the tree of life for the fruit of the tree of evil knowledge. "I will multiply thy sorrows and thy conceptions"; that is, as some think, a greater number must come into existence to make up the number of the predestinate, in consequence of so many being lost; or, perhaps, the number will be greater because

dependent on mere natural law instead of on supernatural considerations. "In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children." The great glory and happiness of maternity is to be associated ever with anguish. "He shall have dominion over thee." The subjection of woman, the too frequent ignoring of the true relations of the sexes, with all the tyranny, degradation, and horrors that still accompany it, is the immediate effect of the substitution of natural, animal, and sensual principles of life for those which are supernatural. Even the completion of human life on earth, the family state, which combines unity with multiplicity and offers such idyllic prospects to all, often becomes disorganized under the influence of naturalistic principles till it is an earthly hell. How far-reaching and various are the consequences of rejecting the supernatural!

III. To Adam God foretells that his rejection of the divine supremacy involves the loss of his own over the earth. The soil will revolt against him and bring forth thorns and briars; the forces of nature will need the coercion of heavy labour before they will yield to man his subsistence. Life is to be a long and bitter struggle against obstacles. Lastly, the body, deserted by the preternatural influx which would have prevented it from retrograding towards common matter, must now go through the ordinary cycle of molecular transformations till the end of the world. The supernatural is necessary for the smooth and ordered working of the wheels of human life, alike in the individual, and the domestic, and the political spheres. It brings a blessing and success most definite, yet one that cannot be catalogued and weighed and defined. The loss of it causes an increase of friction, irregularity of action, disturbance of the accurate adjustment and harmony of parts. Natural remedies can be but partial and uncertain. God's grace is able to modify to us even the material effects of Adam's sin. Act always on supernatural principles, rely always on God's aid, and a blessing will always accompany you.

22.—OUTWARD CONSEQUENCES OF THE SIN.

I. The supernatural state had sanctified and elevated every faculty and action of human nature. Adam had been subject to God alone; all creatures were subject to him, and he was dependent on none of them. In his supernatural and natural endowments he possessed all that he required. The progress and development of man in the unfallen state would have been very different from what it is at present; it would have been more rapid, more complete, more extensive, and would have proceeded in marvellous ways that we cannot picture to ourselves. As we are now, our progress has been very slow, laborious, accompanied by many checks, mistakes, failures. It has been dependent for the most part on the compulsion of our wants, on our material surroundings, on climate, food, and the natural features of our place of abode. Except under such pressure, there has been little progress among men. The loss of the supernatural has changed all the conditions of human life, and among them the character of our material progress. The first step in the new order of material civilization is indicated by the clothing of our first parents in the skins of beasts. The influences of climate had become hostile to them. They needed protection from heat, and cold, and moisture. God Himself inaugurated this first step in the work of civilization for fallen man. We still need His aid, even for our natural and material works; we can carry out what is merely material without God; but we cannot ensure that its action on human beings will be beneficial.

II. The local habitation of unfallen man was closely associated with his supernatural condition of soul. It was adapted to the support and development of a kind of life superior to ours at present. It contained the mysterious tree of life, and it was characterized by that tree. Adam had chosen the tree that represented not simply the natural

state, but an impaired natural state. In that fallen condition his eyes were opened; he saw all things as if by a different light. He saw himself to be out of harmony with the environment in paradise, and although it remained as yet unchanged, it was no longer the same place to him. His sin had destroyed it as a paradise of delight, even before he was expelled from it. Expulsion was but the accentuation of the fatal change in his own condition. The whole earth henceforth for him was a place of labour and suffering. The character of this world and this life varies for men, not so much in proportion to the variety of their external conditions, but according to their mental and spiritual frame. With God, we may generally be happy, always contented. Without Him, the possession of every material advantage will not prevent life from being wearisome, burdensome, tormenting, unendurable.

III. Human life after the fall necessarily bears a different character; thenceforth it was a penance and an expiation as well as a state of trial and of progress. The place of delight is not to be looked for here but hereafter. Now we are under God's malediction and punishment; but by His mercy these are actually the means of our progress, and of our rehabilitation in the supernatural state, and are the price of our eternal life. Thereby, as is generally held, Adam and Eve recovered supernatural grace, and at last worked out their salvation. It is written that divine wisdom "preserved him that was first formed by God . . . and she brought him out of his sin, and gave him power to govern all things" (Wisd. x. 1, 2). It is most important for your happiness and for your understanding of life that you should take the proper view of it. Regarding it as an occasion for pleasure to be made the most of, you will find it to be an enigma and a bitter disappointment. Regarding yourself as a sinner, and life as a time for expiation by labour and suffering, you will find contentment here and happiness hereafter.

23.—THE INWARD CONSEQUENCES OF THE SIN.

I. In Paradise, Adam, united to God by charity, possessed three great goods, *viz.*, pleasure and contentment in seeing God, knowledge and possession of all things, dignity as the supreme ruler of creation. When union with God was destroyed, these great prerogatives were lost, and there remained three great voids in human nature. Man tries to fill these voids with created things; he seeks delight in sensual gratifications, in the knowledge and possession of material goods, in exalting himself in his own esteem above others. Nothing can fill the space once occupied by God; man's desires, therefore, are for ever growing; he may acquire far more than he can use, but he is never satisfied; and his efforts to gain more become continually more ferocious. These desires are what the Apostle speaks of: "All that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John ii. 16). These could not exist in the state of original justice, but they broke out in human nature at the time of the fall, and have been the torment and the peril of man ever since. These are not only the source of individual sins, but of all the miseries, without exception, which affect human society. There is no other remedy for those evils, but to satisfy the illimitable desires of the soul with the one gratification that is infinite, *viz.*, God. All other remedies are futile. Seek no other in your troubles.

II. In the supernatural state, the soul of unfallen man was endowed with sanctifying grace, and with the infused virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. There was an attraction towards good and an aptitude for virtue, so that the soul needed only to know what was good and accordant with the divine will, and was at once borne towards it. Now, however, it is different with us. Not only are we attacked by the three fierce concupiscences, but the

will is weak and infirm, and incapable of carrying out what the intelligence has concluded to be best. Knowledge is no longer sufficient. We are not the less inclined to do wrong for knowing what is right. As the heathen poet said, "I know the better and approve, I do the worse." We require, not only a grace of illumination for the mind, but a grace of excitation and fortitude for the will. We need much stronger graces than sufficed in the state of original justice, to supply the deficiencies in our present infused virtues, and fortify us against the assaults of the concupiscences. This additional *medicinal* grace is given to Adam and all his descendants, on their taking due means to acquire it; and thus the extra danger to our salvation is counterweighed by God's more abundant mercy. Thank God for this excess of His goodness. Let Him carry out His will in you, and He will deliver you.

III. In the state of innocence, man, being immortal, was free from the fear of death. No terrors would have accompanied his translation from this life to the fuller life of heaven. Now, since God pronounced the sentence, the terror of death is on us all. And especially is the remembrance of death bitter to a man who has peace in his possessions (Eccli. xli. 1). In the olden times, even the just looked forward with dread to their sojourn in the place of darkness and expectation, before Christ had opened heaven by His death. We too, however just, know not if we be worthy of love or hate (Eccles. ix. 1). We dare not presume on our salvation ; and at the best we have to look forward to a period of terrible purgation for our forgiven sins. But our Lord in His goodness has robbed death of most of its terrors. It is not only a punishment but the gate of heaven ; it is a blessing as well as a curse. You may regard it then both with hope and fear. Look to it as an expiation and as a victory. You may long for deliverance, but be ready to wait in patience till God calls you. You may shun it, but receive it with resignation as a penance.

24.—THE TRANSMISSION OF THE SIN.

I. The enormous change produced by Adam's sin in him could not be without effect on his descendants. A man of great energies may, with his blood, transmit his features and his character for generations; his family may grow into a tribe and even into a nation impressed with his likeness. A prepotent influence must belong to him who was created to be the father of all mankind. He inaugurated the line of human life, and its general direction was naturally permanent, whether divergent from the line ordained by God, or accordant with it. God had bestowed on our first father an additional supernatural life as a gratuitous gift. Adam held it at first on trial; he was called upon, as head of the race, to ratify this donation by his acceptance of it. He cast it away in his solemn probation, and chose the merely natural state. This he transmitted to us: and necessarily so, for it has never been claimed for heredity that it is able to perpetuate qualities that have not yet been acquired. The inorganic cannot generate the organic, nor the natural life beget supernatural life. We have inherited what our ancestor had to bequeath, all that belonged to the essence of human nature, nothing of that which was to have been superadded as a special reward for fidelity under trial. This state of privation of original justice is the state of sin. God has not allowed us to abide in this condition. In another way He restores what we had lost. Thank Him for His infinite goodness.

II. Original sin in us is not a personal guiltiness demanding punishment and requiring to be expiated by contrition and penance. It is not that we are made responsible for an offence committed by another person, or that his sin is imputed to us. It is not the loss of any grace that is rightfully ours as part of the necessary

equipment of our nature. We have only lost that which we never had, which was not confirmed even to our first ancestor, which is not in any way due to us. We have failed to come into possession of a certain benefit which is quite beyond our natural requirements, desires and conceptions; that is, of the supernatural indwelling of God in us, with the habit of certain virtues, and certain mental and corporal privileges, such as fuller knowledge and immunity from death and disease. But as we are adapted for the reception of this grace, and were intended by God to have it, and require it for our full possible perfection, the loss constitutes a privation and a stain, which is called the state, although not the act, of sin. However, what you have lost without your fault you have also recovered without your merits, through Our Blessed Lord, substantially now, although not fully till hereafter.

III. But further, through original sin we suffer from blindness, ignorance, and error: also from weakness and vacillation in the will; and further from malice, or a propension towards evil, and alienation from holiness and God. The dominion of grace is weakened over our reason, and the dominion of reason over our material nature; so that we are drawn strongly to those pleasures which are the chief incentives to action in the brute beasts. Hence the multitude of our sins, and the miseries which are consequent on them. However, we still retain our freedom, and God gives to those who ask, the strength and grace to resist all impulses to mortal sin. Men are still masters of their lives, and they make them what they are. We may trace all our evils to Adam, in a sense; but much more justly may we attribute them to ourselves. If we only had to endure the unavoidable consequences of Adam's sin, the world would indeed be a Paradise. Faith and obedience can cure or at least mitigate most of our evils. But our individual perversity is the real source of all trouble, and the curse of this world.

25.—RESTITUTION BY JESUS CHRIST.

I. "Where sin abounded grace hath abounded more" (Rom. v. 20). The weakness of humanity is its strength: its disabilities become the source of its privileges. God in His mercy pities our weakness, extending as it does even into wickedness; and, like tender mothers, He bestows greater love and care on the most afflicted and troublesome of His children. God knows that our tendency to sin dates from before our birth, that the perversion of our character is an inheritance from our ancestors, that our offences are due in some measure to our surroundings, and not entirely to our deliberate malice. The smallest injustice or harshness towards us is utterly alien from His infinite goodness. He makes the broadest and kindest allowance for our deficiencies, and bestows on us still greater favours and aids towards salvation. As far as the dominance of our free will allows, God compels us to come in; and it is only by extraordinary blindness, perversity and obstinacy, that we can be lost. God has adapted the order of His Providence to our needs. Our state of sinfulness becomes our strongest claim upon His mercy, and may even become the occasion of higher glory for us. In the present order, God exhibits His holiness and power, not by rejecting us for our sins, but by sanctifying us in spite of them and through them. Confess yourself an unworthy sinner, admit that you have no claims, and at once you are endowed by the Son of God with His own claims to eternal glory.

II. The measure of our restitution is as the measure of our fall. We fell in another, we are restored in another. If there is hardship in our suffering through another's sin, it is counterbalanced by the profit we gain from another's sacrifice. We sinned in Adam, we have made atonement in the second Adam. Mankind form one corporate body, participating in one another's actions, good and bad. Jesus Christ

is as fully a member of that body as is Adam. In accordance with His greatness, He has borne a proportionate share of the consequences of sin; and His infinite merits become the common property of His race, the human race. Jesus Christ has taken up the supernatural portion of Adam's task, neglected by him; through Christ we are born again to the higher life by water and the Holy Ghost; and even our bodies, now mortal and corruptible by sin, will recover their lost immortality. Be faithful to the new Father of your race. Maintain inviolate the new life He has given you, and avoid the second death of personal sin and eternal loss.

III. St. Paul seems to indicate that our gains surpass our losses, and that we are better off under the Restitution than under original justice. "But not as the offence so also is the gift; for if by the offence of one many have died, much more the grace of God . . . hath abounded unto many" (Rom. v. 15). Sin has not destroyed God's plans, but enabled Him to carry them out more wonderfully. Our happiness will be greater in that we have been snatched from the jaws of hell. Joy over the repentant sinner is greater than for those who need not penance. It may be that more will now be saved than if Adam had not sinned. All would have had to be tried, even in that case; some would have failed, and that failure might have been irrevocable, like the angels', because more deliberate, and without our present excuses. Now, the worst may be saved. David became the man after God's own heart; St. Peter became the Prince of the Apostles; St. Mary Magdalene one of the highest in the love of Jesus. Do not complain of the present facts of life; they all turn to the benefit of men. Do your duty and you will have no reason to regret the fall of Adam. Thank God for changing that fatal transgression into a "felix culpa," a "blessed sin." Take courage even from the sight of your sins; with due repentance they will help you to rise to better things.

26.—THE GOVERNMENT OF THE WORLD.

I. "Thy providence, O Father, governeth it" (Wisd. xiv. 3). God is not only Creator, He is also Guide and Ruler. The action of governing and directing all things is complementary to the action of creating them. It is necessitated manifestly by God's perfection, by His love for all that He has made, and His continual interest in it. The arrangement and order of the universe show clear evidence of God's continual guidance. Every creature, every molecule and atom, has its use and function; it serves God, and tends towards Him according to its nature and capacity; every creature moves forward towards the end and purpose of its being, and that, in the last analysis, is God. Material things do not, like intellectual beings, approach to the possession and enjoyment of God; but they represent His perfections, make Him known to those who can understand Him, and bring them nearer to Him. God has knowledge of every one of the innumerable particles in the universe, and manages and rules it for the general good. This is the greatest happiness and consolation to the faithful soul. You are not abandoned to yourself, nor left to be the sport of accident and chance; "for in His hands are all the ends of the earth" (Ps. xciv. 4). Never forget this, or think that you are forgotten. Say always: "The Lord ruleth me. I shall want for nothing" (Ps. xxii. 1).

II. Associated with government is the preservation of all things according to their kind. This requires a continual influx of the same energy which originally brought things out of nothingness; without it they would cease to exist, and would return whence they came. God's influence is as necessary for existence as the sun is necessary for the maintenance of heat and motion on this earth. In a civil State, as it is better ordered and more firmly established,

so does the machinery for coercion obtrude itself the less upon our notice. So the evidence of God's continual action is not to be found in terrifying exhibitions of enormous power, but in the quiet order which preserves the great mechanism of the universe in its countless details. Consider how elaborate and multifold is the machinery of earth, air and water, of seasons and temperature, of chemical and mechanical forces. Consider how delicate is our bodily adjustment in blood, and brain, and nerves, and lungs, and digestion; how little it would take to derange all this—a few degrees of temperature, a particle of injurious matter, an instantaneous suspension of some minute operation within us. What a perfect and wonderful balance is maintained! And all this is as nothing compared to the care for the preservation and guidance of your supernatural life. Thank God for all this.

III. God's governance of all things culminates in His eternal glorification by the souls of men. Our existence has a double object and term; the one nearest to ourselves is our own happiness in salvation, the final and chief one is the external glorification of God by us. The whole of this world and all the work of creation circles round this object and gravitates towards it. This is the explanation of the mystery of the universe. The success of our personal part in this great work depends on ourselves, aided by God's grace; we may fail by our own fault to accomplish our destiny. But in any case, our life and our fate render glory to God. Either in heaven or in hell we shall eternally witness to God's love, justice, holiness, and wisdom, to the advantages of serving Him, the excellence of His law, the easiness of salvation, the absolute necessity of God to our perfection and happiness. You cannot escape from the all-powerful hand of God. Willingly or unwillingly you must conduce to His glory; all you can do is to choose whether you will serve Him to your own infinite advantage or to your eternal detriment.

27.—PRINCIPLES OF THE DIVINE GOVERNANCE.

I. Although God has supreme power and direct authority over all creatures, yet He makes use of *secondary causes* or subordinate authorities to work out His natural and His spiritual decrees. A being is more admirable when its goodness is diffusive than when its goodness is in itself and for itself only. God completes the likeness to Himself which is in creatures, by making them channels and agents of the bounty which proceeds in the first instance from Himself. Thus the sun is the means of communicating heat, energy, motion, to this earth. Parents are the intermediaries by whom God gives life to new beings, and furnishes them with their daily bread. In like manner, Jesus Christ, as man, has all things committed to Him by the Father, and is the first agent and supreme mediator. But all creatures have functions of utility towards others. The angels are the ministers of God. Men are apostles, teachers, intercessors, mediums of divine grace. The Blessed Virgin has, beyond all others, the office of intercessor for all mankind, and channel of grace from her Divine Son. Parents and civil authorities rule in the name of God, and declare His will in the natural, political or domestic sphere. They should remember that they are His agents and act accordingly. You too have to act on God's behalf for the natural or spiritual welfare of others, as His agent, mediator, or temporal providence. Endeavour to make yourself an adequate representative of Him, and act in His spirit and for His ends.

II. Another principle of God's governing action is the harmony of mercy and justice, and the predominance of mercy over all His works. God's dealings with the angelic

world are all full of mercy and love, in creating them in endowing them with grace and glory and happiness, and with virtue and strength to persevere if so they wished. So too it is with man. God anticipates him with the abundance of His mercies. He placed Adam in Paradise, gave him the means of working out his salvation without difficulty in the midst of delights, without having even to pass through the gates of death. Mercy being rejected by man, justice and severity appeared. But how merciful was this severity! The Second Person of the Blessed Trinity took on Himself to make atonement and bear the punishment, that we might escape almost free from our own deeds. It is only after the obstinate rejection individually of this crowning mercy that God abandons men to the consequence of their sins. How happy you are to be under the rule of such a Lord!

III. Although the will of God is all-powerful, and although events happen according to His decrees, yet His will harmonizes with the nature given to creatures by the same divine will. His agents and secondary causes influence others in accordance with the law of their nature. So God rules all things, but not in an arbitrary or irregular manner Some beings are so governed that they act constantly and uniformly as if by necessity; others, free beings, are so ruled by grace and by prayer, by angels or men, that they retain full freedom of action. The results depend fully on themselves as well as fully on God. Remember ever to depend on God and to depend on yourself. You cannot succeed without Him; and at the same time, you must not leave all to Him as if He acted alone without you. There is a certain work of God to be done in the world which requires your virtue and energy for its success; and without you it will not be done. Do not say: God is omnipotent, my efforts are of no avail, He can do it without me. He is indeed the source of all good, but you are the natural agent by whom it is to be accomplished, and you are responsible for it.

MEDITATIONS ON CHRISTIAN DOGMA.

TREATISE V.

THE INCARNATION.

1.—THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE INCARNATION.

I. The union of the Divinity with humanity is called by St. Paul "the mystery which hath been hidden from ages and generations, but now is made manifest to His saints" (Col. i. 26). Even in our own sphere we cannot detect the point of union between our body and soul, or the manner of it. Still farther beyond us is this most marvellous operation of the Omnipotent Trinity. It is beyond all our experience, and imagination, and desire. It is indeed "a new thing upon the earth" (Jer. xxxi. 22). The angels even cannot comprehend this novelty beyond all other novelties and without example. In order to grasp it with our intelligence and fathom its profundities of ingenuity (so to speak) and beauty, we should need a full comprehension of the mystery of the Three Persons in Unity. In order to accept it, we need the infused power of faith from God, spiritual vision, and the light of God's countenance shining upon us. Reason cannot discover it or explain it, but only approve its reasonableness. How many there are from whom even now this mystery is hidden, who apprehend it most imperfectly, or to whom it is anything but a living reality! Be grateful to God for revealing it to you, and ask Him to enlighten your mind in meditating on it.

II. Nothing can profit us more than reflection on the different aspects of the Incarnation. "To know Thee is perfect justice; and to know Thy justice and Thy power is the root of immortality" (Wisd. xv. 3). Jesus Christ is the supreme revelation of God to man. This is the best book for us to study, the compendium of our perfection in the natural, the intellectual and the spiritual life. It raises us at once out of this feverish, sordid, deceptive sphere into a purer, brighter atmosphere It gives us true and

satisfying views about all things, and co-ordinates all the facts of the universe. We find in it the noblest model of human action, strength to endure adversity with courage, the example of the virtues of every state of life. We may learn from it the true nature of sin, its destructive effects, the method of resisting it and doing penance for it; we are assured of redemption from our sins, and are brought into union with supreme goodness. The knowledge of Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of the divine promise to draw us with the cords of Adam (Osee xi. 4). Mankind have always craved to possess God visibly and tangibly; this great doctrine satisfies that desire. Devote yourself to a serious study of Jesus Christ, and this not intellectually only, but practically and devotionally.

III. The knowledge of the Incarnation is necessary for salvation. "This is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" (John xvii. 3). None can accomplish their necessary development unless they grasp the truth that God became man and died for us; rejecting this, they cannot properly know and serve and love God. Jesus Christ alone is the way, the truth, and the life (John xiv. 6). Without Him we cannot find the right path, we walk in ignorance of the principal science of all, we tend towards social and spiritual death. But our knowledge must be accompanied by love and complete obedience; otherwise it is a mere theoretical and ineffective knowledge, and will lead Him to say to us one day, "Amen I say to you, I know you not" (Matt. xxv. 12). This doctrine is the corner-stone of Christianity, and on it has been built up all our civilization, progress and happiness. All the evils of life are the result of ignoring Jesus Christ, His law, and His Church. Let it not be said of you that you have been interested in all except the saving knowledge: "the ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib; but Israel hath not known Me, and My people hath not understood" (Isa. i. 3).

2.—IMAGES OF THE INCARNATION.

I. There is no exact parallel in nature to the Incarnation of the Second Divine Person, but there are some comparisons which partially represent it; and these may be used cautiously, if we remember that they are not adequate images of it. The Incarnation is likened to three persons who invest one among themselves with a new and special robe. The three Divine Persons all operate in investing the Second Person, God the Son, with the additional garment of human nature. Holy Scripture speaks of the Divine Humanity as a garment. "Who is this that cometh up from Edom, with dyed garments from Bosra, this beautiful One in His robe, walking in the greatness of His strength? I that speak justice and am a defender to save. Why then is Thy apparel red, and Thy garments like theirs that tread in the wine-press?" (Isa. lxiii. 1, 2). St. John also speaks of the Word of God as having "on His garment and on His thigh written, King of kings and Lord of lords" (Apoc. xix. 16). God the Son, on entering this world, assumed human nature as a garment that made Him visible to us while cloaking the glory of His Divinity. It was something exterior and different from His divine nature; and when it was rent in the Passion, the personality of the Word still remained undefiled and impassible. Thank Our Lord for thus divesting Himself of the royal garment of His glory, and putting on the lowly apparel that you wear. When you approach Him, divest yourself of your pride and supposed grandeur and merits, and clothe yourself in humility so as to be like to Him.

II. The union of the two natures in the one person of Jesus Christ may also be compared to the union of spirit

and matter, of soul and body, in our one nature and person. There is this difference, that in man the two elements form one complex nature, while in Our Lord the two natures remain distinct, and are brought together in the unity of the one Divine Personality. We have in our nature two things of diverse character and origin; the body is of the earth, produced from matter, the soul is breathed into it from without by the direct action of God. The soul is more noble, as having spiritual being, and intelligence, and freedom, than the body with its senses. The body is the instrument of the soul's action; the brain and organs are the medium by which the soul receives impressions from the outer world and exercises action upon it. The soul elevates the body, and gives it new powers and a special position in the universe. Similarly the divine nature of the Second Person elevates the Sacred Humanity. The humanity is the dwelling-place of the Word of God, and is the instrument of its action in teaching us, manifesting the Godhead to us, redeeming us. Give glory to God the Son for so elevating human nature in His own person first, and thereby in all mankind and in you. Endeavour to keep yourself upon the same high level, and make yourself worthy of that honour.

III. The human nature in Our Lord is further compared to those sensible qualities which we attribute to any substance, such as its resistance, extension, form, colour, warmth. The object is vested with these qualities; these are what we perceive, but they have no individuality or separate existence apart from the material substance. So the human nature of Christ has not a separate existence as a person apart from His personality as Word of God. Jesus Christ then is God; He is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity endued with a human nature of body and soul, and not united with a different human person capable of existing apart from the Divine Person. Recognize the awful dignity of Jesus when you read of Him or enter His presence, and adore Him accordingly.

3.—THE FACT OF THE INCARNATION.

I. This most wonderful mystery, were it not a fact and revealed to us, might well be deemed an impossibility. How can it be that the Infinite is united with the finite, the Eternal with a temporal, mortal nature, perfect sanctity with a nature derived from a tainted source? How could the Godhead so descend? How could a portion of this universe be so elevated? How could such contradictory terms be brought together in one person? The imagination of man, in its wildest flights, could not devise such a thing; and the more we know of God and of man, the more remote would such a possibility seem. We might well ask, "How shall this be done?" And the only answer is the angel's, "No word shall be impossible with God" (Luke i. 34, 37). The Almighty is not limited in His works to such things as we can understand. His action does not need to be seen and approved by us in advance. His wisdom is infinite to devise such a thing, His power is infinite to accomplish it, His goodness and love are infinite to decree it for our advantage. He would allow no obstacle to stand in the way of pardoning and glorifying us. God does more still. He will unite Himself with you. Wisdom, strength, and love are needed for the purpose, not only in God, but in you. Let no seeming impossibility deter you from this consummation.

II. It might further appear to be a degradation unworthy of the Divine Majesty that God should become man. Even the inspired writer describes it as a humbling, an emptying of Himself, an annihilation (Phil. ii. 7-8). Yet there are beautiful harmonies of fitness in it that make it

fully worthy of God. The greater the indignity of it, the more does it manifest the infinity of divine love and mercy; as an exhibition of the ingenuities of God's wisdom and power, it is more overwhelming than all the grandeurs of the universe. Moreover, it is by this that God closes up the whole chain of being, and brings back to Himself in the man Christ Jesus, the long series that was commenced when the first forces of matter were created. God "hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ unto Himself . . . in the dispensation of the fulness of times, to re-establish all things in Christ that are in heaven and on earth, in Him" (Eph. i. 5, 10). The greatest perfection and beauty of a thing is in the fulfilment of its purpose. It depends on each of us whether the Incarnation shall be a success or a failure in our regard. Do your share to make its effects worthy of God, by glorifying Him for it, and bringing forth its fruits in your sanctification.

III. God therefore wrought this wonderful thing, "and the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us" (John i. 14). It was the greatest condescension; but it was no degradation, for the Eternal Son did not come into contact with sin, nor into personal union with a sinner. He took a human body, descended from Adam, and going back for its remote origin to the slime of the earth. It had gone through a process of preparation for many ages, and its elements were at last isolated from the universal current of original sin in the Immaculate Virgin-Mother. He had prepared a tabernacle for Himself in her and sanctified it in advance, so that she might communicate to Him a body and blood absolutely free from contamination, and fitted to be the material of the sacrifice which was to neutralize the effects of sin. Thank God for this great work. Admire His power and goodness. Confess and adore the Divinity of Jesus Christ, and say, "Only in Thee is God, and there is no God besides Thee. Verily Thou art a hidden God, the God of Israel, the Saviour" (Isa. xlv. 14, 15).

4.—THE HYPOSTATIC UNION.

I. Consider the terms, or the elements of the union which took place in the Incarnation. One was the Divinity, the Second adorable Person of the Trinity; the other was the Humanity, composed of real soul and body, with all its powers, senses, and members. The soul is the first of the two sub-elements which compose the human element. The Divinity entered primarily into union with the soul, as being that which completes human nature, and in which the dominant faculties reside. The soul was the chief seat of Adam's sin, and of the taint of sin in his descendants, and of the consequences or punishment of sin. But God did not abhor even the body; it is the companion of the soul, the instrument of its action, a sufferer by the sin, and it is destined to enter into glory. Therefore the Word is said, not to be made a soul, nor even made man, but to have been made flesh. "Because the children are partakers in flesh and blood, He also Himself in like manner hath been partaker of the same" (Heb. ii. 14). We have here a reflection of the Trinity; with this difference, that in the Godhead there is Unity of Substance with Trinity of Persons, and in Christ there is Unity of Person with a trinity of substances, *viz.*, the Divinity, the spiritual soul, the material body. How complete and thorough is all that Jesus does for you! Let your service of Him be real and complete in every respect.

II. The two natures are so wonderfully combined in Christ that He is God-Man and Man-God. Each nature remains complete; the Godhead remains the Godhead, perfect and unchanged; and yet we can say that, in Christ, God is Man and the Man is God. This hypostatic union is an

example of that combination of unity and multiplicity which marks God's works. In material nature we find a unity of law, of harmony, of order, amongst the enormous multitude of creatures. Higher still there is the union of the material and the spiritual in man; which, however, is dissolved by death. Then comes the union of our souls with God by grace, which, during this life, is liable to be terminated by sin. More perfect than this is the Hypostatic Union of Divinity and Humanity in Christ; even death did not dissolve this, for when it broke the union of His soul and body, the Divinity still remained united to each of the separated elements. Above all, there is the transcendent Unity of God, which does not combine together separate substances, but by its internal action constitutes a triple personality. Rejoice in the great glory and honour and happiness possessed by the Sacred Humanity of Our Lord. Union with Him will be your highest glory, and honour, and happiness, on earth and in heaven.

III. Consider certain singularities of the hypostatic union. Only the single Person of God the Son was united with human nature. Again, the Divinity assumed into this union, not all mankind, nor even the angels; "for nowhere doth He take hold of the angels, but of the seed of Abraham He taketh hold" (Heb. ii. 16); the single created nature that was born of Mary was elevated to this union. Further, Christ had only one parent on earth, His Blessed Mother. He was the only Son of the Eternal Father, and, both as God and as Man, God was His only Father. God will not give His glory to another. Jesus Christ has a glory of His own which is given to no other. The Blessed Virgin Mary has a singular glory too in the Incarnation, which is beyond all that has been granted to human beings. There are certain singularities of God's Providence in regard to you. You have some special gifts and graces, and in return there are some special services which you have to render to God.

5.—THE HYPOSTATIC UNION AND ATONEMENT.

I. By the fall of Adam the supernatural career of mankind was abruptly terminated, and grievous offence was offered to God in lieu of service. There was needed a source of restitution for man and of atonement to God. Without this, the end of God's mighty works would be failure most miserable and the triumph of evil over good. If God simply cancelled and ignored the sin, it would still be a triumph of evil; for it would mean that the universe was not sufficiently equipped to work out its purposes; it would mean that the ordinary law was deficient and had to be supplemented by a quasi afterthought; it would be an extinction of energy without allowing it to work itself out, the intervention of an extrinsic force to remedy the inherent incurable defects in God's own work. The perfection of God's work demands that there should be in the human race itself the means of triumphing over evil, of justifying its own existence and the Providence of God. The goodness of God requires that, whatever happens, good should predominate over evil. God's dignity requires that His great work should not end in a fiasco. Regular order requires that every force should be allowed to work itself out. Equity requires that the offender should suffer the consequences of his offence and should himself make atonement. The only appropriate form of restitution is one in which human energies should neutralize the evil done by men. How helpless you are in the face of such requirements! How hopeless is the case of unaided sinful humanity!

II. The atonement required is infinite, for it had to be adequate to the evil inflicted; and the restitution of man was to the possession of the Infinite. Sin, though the consequence of a finite act, has a certain infinity of effect, for it is the contradiction of all that is positive in God, and firstly of Being, which is the essential perfection in God: "I am

who am" (Ex. iii. 14). *In its tendency* it is destructive of God (*v.* p. 50). An equal energy is required to counteract it; *viz.*, one that *in tendency* shall be, as it were, creative of God, or, *actually*, productive of God's presence. No act of ours, however good, has this supreme efficacy. An infinite vital action is required; and that can proceed only from an infinite person. The human race can never supply this. All our action apart from God is worthless and destructive. Without religion all human talent and good intentions are positively noxious.

III. The Hypostatic Union combines the two necessary conditions; its action is at once human and infinite. As God alone, Jesus Christ could not make atonement; it would be a new violation and not a satisfaction of justice for one to sin and another to bear the burden. But, as man, the Divine Person is one of the offending race. He is not an isolated individual; for human society is not an agglomeration of atoms, but a corporate body with common life and action. As every particle on this earth affects every particle in the whole universe, so each man's action, good or bad, affects the whole race. The acts of Jesus Christ are the actions of the Son of Humanity; we share in the effects of His, He shares in the effects of ours. The same law which causes us to suffer by the sins of Adam, of our fathers, of our countrymen, causes Jesus to suffer by our sins, and us to profit by His virtues. He, as being the first-born and the greatest portion of humanity, contributes proportionally more (*i.e.*, infinitely more) to the sum of good, and suffers a greater share of the effects of sin. As He, then, is predestined eternally to be Son of Man, the human race contains in itself a vast predominance of good over evil, and the means of atoning for its sins without any violent destruction of natural forces or the intervention of extraneous ones. Thus the Atonement is not only a marvel of mercy but of well-ordered harmony and regular law. Every act of yours has its full effect for good or evil on the whole world.

6.—SPECULATIONS ON THE ATONEMENT.

I. Which were the sins that necessitated the Atonement by Christ? 1. Chiefly original sin. This had been the axe at the root of the tree; it had cut mankind off from the supernatural life in its source; it had subverted the original design of God; it had broken the final link of the chain that bound the universe to God; it deprived God of the service and glory of the whole human race. The merciful love of God demanded the restitution of mankind no less than did His greatness. Adam's sin had affected all his descendants without their own concurrence, and God would not allow them to be deprived of their birthright by the act of another. 2. Our own deliberate mortal sins moved God to pity rather than to wrath; they are to a considerable extent the result of an aptitude towards evil for which we are not responsible; their positive penalties are so much more terrible than the mere privations which original sin inflicts on us; and we are absolutely powerless to escape their consequences without aid from God. 3. Our venial sins are not of infinite malice, they do not sever us from God, and probably do not require the atonement of an infinite Person. In fact, however, Our Lord has assumed the burthen of them as well, and has left so much less of their punishment for us to bear. Consider what you would have been without Our Lord, how utterly helpless, and how much you owe to His love. Thank Him, love Him, render Him your best service in return.

II. Would Our Lord have come if Adam had not sinned? Scotus, etc., think He would. They consider that, even apart from sin, He is "the first-born of every creature . . . that in all things He may hold the primacy" (Col. i. 15, 18); and that He was predestined in the original divine plan to be one of mankind. This view accords more with those ideas of progressive development to perfection and of the regularity of law, which are suggested by all God's works. It shows us the complete cycle of evolution proceeding

originally from God and returning finally to Him in the union of the highest term of creation with the divine nature. It shows us too, that in God's original design the human race was fully equipped for all contingencies, and able to work out its destinies (through Jesus Christ) without any subsequent interference with the order of things. St. Thomas and others dwell rather on the idea of God's infinite mercy to sinners. They think it more accordant with His goodness that He should have granted more to men as sinners than to them as just and not needing penance; and that He should turn the supreme evil of sin into an occasion for a greater benefit than was contemplated originally (so to speak). In any case the fact remains that Jesus is manifested to us chiefly as our Redeemer from sin and death. We can glorify Him both for what we know Him actually to have done, and for what we conjecture that He would have done for us.

III. If Adam had not sinned, would Our Lord have atoned for such of us as might have still committed sin? We cannot say; but we may perhaps draw an analogy from the case of the angels. Free-will is the appanage of every man; this involves probation before reward, and therefore the possibility of sin. It may be that the angels, with their fuller knowledge, greater stability and determination of will, would not have taken hold of the opportunity of repentance, and that, for this reason, it was not offered to them. This too might have been the case with men more fully endowed and possessing no inherited propension towards evil. Our very instability in good involves instability in evil, and makes us apt for repentance. So our weakness and inherited misery constitute our greatest advantage; and it may be that many of us will be saved under present conditions who would have been lost if Adam had not sinned. The higher gifts of the angels carried with them greater responsibilities and dangers. We too, if not fallen in Adam, might have been too gifted for penance and redemption. Thank God for thus compensating for your disadvantages.

7.—THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE INCARNATION.

I. Consider the time when the Incarnation took place. The prophet said: "O Lord, Thy work: in the midst of the years bring it to life: in the midst of the years Thou shalt make it known" (Hab. iii. 2). On the day when Adam fell, God gave the promise of redemption, so that thenceforth all men might look forward to it, and be saved by virtue of their faith and trust in their Saviour. But the accomplishment of the promise was long deferred; the time was not ripe for it. A season of preparation, desire, and prayer, had to precede the granting of the great gift. It had to be merited by the just, and it took place as an answer to their prayers. It depended too on the sinfulness of mankind. They were allowed to go on during thousands of years by the light of their own reason and certain instalments of revelation. At last, when it seemed that the early impulses of truth and moral principle were exhausted, when mankind were falling into disorganization and deep degradation, when all perceived that nothing short of a messenger from heaven and a new revelation could renew the face of the earth, God came as man. The time of His appearance was adapted to the varying stages of human development, to the spiritual condition, and to the moral deterioration of the world. It was "in the midst of the years"; early ages lived by their expectation of it, succeeding generations have lived by their knowledge of it. Consider how fortunate you are in seeing and hearing things that so many prophets and kings desired, but never saw or heard. Give thanks to God.

II. Picture to yourself the place where this mystery occurred. Go in spiritual pilgrimage to the lowly village among the hills of Galilee. Imagine its narrow, winding, unpaved streets, the humble whitewashed cottages with

their flat roofs, the gardens beside, the wide view taking in Mount Carmel, Hermon, and the broad rich plain of Esdraelon. It is one of the holiest spots on earth. Before the time of Our Lord it was never mentioned; it was not only obscure, but a proverb of contempt among the Jews. God alone and His angels knew that this was a village of election, and that in it was to be accomplished the promise made to Adam, renewed to Abraham and Jacob and David, and expected by all mankind. The Holy House had perhaps existed for years and years before; the angels watched it and venerated it, but none among men suspected the great event which was to sanctify it. So does God select the humble, retired, obscure soul as His dwelling place. His presence there is unsuspected. The world ignores and despises His glory which is there concealed, but the angels keep watch and adore Him in His abode.

III. Consider the causes that brought about the accomplishment of the Incarnation. The chief was the Father's love for His erring helpless creatures, and the desire of God the Son to give Himself for their redemption. On earth there was the misery, the sin, and the hopelessness of the Jews and Gentiles. Another important element was the continual aspiration and prayer for the coming of the Messias, rising from the hearts of the faithful. This was kept alive, and was shown in figure by the ceremonial of the temple, the sacrifices, the festivals, and by the chief events of Jewish history. Isaias gave words to it when he said: "Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain down the Just One: let the earth be opened and bud forth the Saviour. . . . Oh that Thou wouldst rend the heavens and come down: the mountains would melt away at Thy presence" (Isa. xlv. 8, lxiv. 1). This continual prayer availed much in Adam, Abraham, Moses and David, and at length it prevailed when offered by the last of the long line, the Holy Virgin of Nazareth. If your works be little, you can still do much by desires and prayers.

8.—DIVINE LOVE IN THE INCARNATION.

I. The Incarnation is the chief exhibition of God's wonderful love for men; and thus it is that Holy Scripture sets it forth: "God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son" (John iii. 16). As the infinite love of the Divinity within itself produces a third Divine Person within its Unity, so has this love produced a Divine Person among creatures, *viz.* God the Son made man. Consider the Father's love for us in four aspects. 1. It is the love of an infinite Being, and so is great in proportion to His mighty nature. 2. It is exhibited towards insignificant, ungrateful, and yet arrogant creatures, who deserve only to be cast off for their repeated treasons. 3. It communicates to us as its gift, not some created production of God's hand, but something greater than the whole universe, an infinite gift—the Divinity itself in Jesus Christ. 4. Its last result for us is eternal life, full of all glory and delight, and exceeding our imagination and even our natural capacities. Consider each point separately and apply it to yourself. No comfort can be so great as to know with certainty that you are the object of such a love, and that you will, at a day not far distant, taste of its fulness. How blessed you are in this!

II. Consider the love of God the Son as shown by His becoming man for us; "the Son of God, who loved me and delivered Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20). This was the share that fell to Him in the working out of our redemption. Foreseeing from all eternity what would happen on earth, He had decreed to restore us by the sacrifice of Himself. As He is the Image of the Godhead, He came to renew in us the image of God which had been defaced. As He is the Son, He came to communicate to us the quality of sons of God, becoming like to us so as to make us like

to Him. He came in the flesh so as to conquer Satan in the same element in which we had been deceived and conquered. In doing this He assumed the lowest form in which intelligent beings are made, and concealed the splendour of His Divinity, subjecting Himself to all the liabilities of human nature. He worked out our salvation with an infinite prodigality of labour and suffering, doing, not the least that would suffice for the purpose, but the maximum that His love dictated, enough for the salvation of ten thousand worlds. Yet there are many who reject and outrage this love, and requite it with carelessness, disobedience, and even hatred. You are ready to lavish your love on human beings, or dumb animals even; will you be like so many, excluding but one from your heart, and that one your Lord and Saviour?

III. The love of the Holy Ghost is shown by His co-operation in the Incarnation. It was He that inspired the prayers that hastened it. "The Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings" (Rom. viii. 26). He prepared the Holy Virgin and filled her with grace, that she might be a fit mother for the All-Holy Son of God; He was also the source of the numerous miracles in the Incarnation. The Holy Ghost, as proceeding from Father and Son, had received from the Son the communication of the Divine Nature, and now, in this mystery, He bestows a human nature on the Son. He came upon the Blessed Virgin and overshadowed her with His power. He was poured forth on Our Lord, and adorned His Humanity with every grace. He guided Him and worked in His miraculous works, and He appeared visibly to declare Our Lord's Divinity. He came down on the infant Church, and abides with it for ever, to protect and carry on what Christ commenced. As in the Trinity the Holy Ghost is the bond of union between the Father and Son, so in the Incarnation He is the bond of the Son with humanity. Ask the Divine Spirit to increase your knowledge and love of this great mystery.

9.—THE GRACES AND VIRTUES OF CHRIST.

I. The graces of Jesus Christ are innumerable and splendid as the stars of heaven. He is "full of grace and truth" (John i. 14). "In Him it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell" (Col. i. 19). The basis of all His graces was the supereminent one of the hypostatic union, the union of the divine and human natures. This makes Him the Holy of Holies, and involves all divine and human perfections and graces; it excludes the possibility of sin or deficiency, just as the fulness of light is the exclusion of darkness; it makes Our Lord the supreme object of divine love. This grace, as being infinite, was not susceptible of increase. Neither could the blessedness and happiness of Our Lord be increased, as He always enjoyed the full vision of the Divinity. Our Lord therefore required no further impulse of grace to help Him in His miracles and works of virtue. This completeness of Our Lord's graces is the source of all the graces bestowed on mankind. He is the head in which they all centre, and from thence they are transmitted to all parts of the mystical body, to His Blessed Mother first, who was full of grace, and thence to us. "Of His fulness we all have received, and grace for grace" (John i. 16). Address Our Lord with the Psalmist. "Thou art beautiful above the sons of men: grace is poured forth on Thy lips; therefore hath God blessed Thee for ever" (Ps. xliv. 3). He will communicate His graces to you according to your love for Him.

II. Virtues are as streams which flow in different directions from their source, which is sanctifying grace. All the virtues we can conceive existed in Our Lord in supreme perfection, except such as were incompatible with the Divinity, like faith, and repentance for personal sin. Isaias

tells us of the seven gifts of the Spirit in Him. Elsewhere we read of such virtues as poverty, lowliness, and obedience, which seem to be almost unworthy of an Infinite Being. He practised the virtue of religion with all the subsidiary virtues which have God for their object. Next He had those virtues which regard our brethren; all the virtues of a son towards His Holy Mother, of a citizen, a workman, a ruler of men, a teacher, a priest; generosity, fidelity, justice, sobriety, courage, modesty, prudence, benevolence. These virtues make Jesus your perfect model. Whatever your state of life, you will find its virtues in Him. Whenever you are in doubt as to the course of action to be followed, consider Our Lord's life, and see how He would have acted. Such will be not only the most virtuous, but the most prudent and beneficial course.

III. "He that followeth Me walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John viii. 12). This is the fulness of human perfection. Our Lord's work was not only to expiate our sins, but to restore in us the supernatural likeness of God. All aspire in some way to the qualities of God; but many seek it unduly and rebelliously, like Satan in Paradise, and Adam in Eden. Our Blessed Lord satisfies that desire legitimately, and shows us in Himself the different ways in which it is possible for men to be like the infinite and all-holy God. The grandeur and holiness of the Old Testament saints attach to them as being figures of the Messias yet to come; they represented His death like Abel, His priesthood like Aaron, His peacefulness like Moses, or His obedience, or gentleness, or prayer. So too the saints of the New Testament are great in proportion as they are formed on Our Lord's model and represent Him to us. There is some special aspect of Our Lord's life, which you are called upon to represent, some particular virtue for which you have a facility, some work corresponding to one of His. He will point it out to you if you beseech Him, and will give you strength to follow in His footsteps.

10.—THE INTELLECT OF CHRIST.

I. Intellectual power is the most efficient force on earth, and the advantage most esteemed. It raises men more surely than anything else, and gives them command of the minds, and thereby of the services of other men. In the world it is rated more highly than moral excellence, and still more so than spiritual. Our Lord possessed the most perfect and powerful of created minds, but He concealed its brilliance, and He employed it solely for religious ends. Still, glimpses of its power appeared at times; as when He discoursed at the age of twelve with the sages in the temple; when His enemies confessed that never had man so spoken before; when, with a single word, He eluded snares devised by the most acute and unscrupulous minds; when He laid down the laws that should govern human life; and when He organized the Church which was to defy the ravages of time, the assaults of vindictiveness, and, worse still, the tepidity and neglect of its own members. If Our Lord had not been God, His human intellect would have dominated all the affairs of men, and His law would have been accepted as a masterpiece of insight and prudence. But, because He is divine, the spirit of evil has induced so many of mankind to reject the only system which is capable of meeting their needs. The great bulk of men pin their faith on some eminent intellect, and follow its guidance implicitly. Take Jesus Christ as your master and guide; study to know His mind, and carry out His will with thorough trust and obedience.

II. "Christ Jesus in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. ii. 3). There was a double intellectual operation in Our Lord, of the divine and of the human intelligence. As God, He possessed "all the fulness of the Godhead corporally" (Col. ii. 9), including its

infinite knowledge. As man, He possessed all the knowledge of the blessed in heaven, enjoying as He did in His Humanity the full sight of the Beatific Vision. He had an infused or innate supernatural and natural knowledge of all things, so that it was not necessary for Him to learn them in the ordinary way. He had also acquired knowledge, for it is said of Him as a child that He "advanced in wisdom" (Luke ii. 52); not that He really learnt anything that He was ignorant of, but His faculties apprehended different things in succession, and manifested this progressively. "He knew what was in man" (John ii. 25) and what is best for man. What folly it is to think that we can advance our best interests by our futile prudence, when it is opposed to the dictates of Christ's wisdom!

III. The knowledge possessed by Christ was practical and efficient; it was not that vain science which puffeth up (1 Cor. viii. 1). It guided all His operations with consummate prudence, to the glory of God and the advantage of men; and was not merely an ornament or a personal gratification, or a source of pride, or of false inferences, as with men. His universal knowledge was also the basis upon which was built up His love for His Father and for us; for He knew both the perfections of God and the miseries of man, and He was moved to adoration or to pity accordingly. You have received much wonderful knowledge both spiritual and temporal; and all knowledge is in some way the knowledge of God. Yet there are many who have such knowledge of God and yet will not recognize Him. The Scripture describes them as having eyes and seeing not, ears and hearing not, hands and working not, mouths and speaking not; for they will not use their faculties for the only purpose which is ultimately profitable to God, and men, and themselves. Seek for all knowledge, and use it for God's service and your own salvation; but, above all, seek for the knowledge of God and let it lead you to His love.

11.—THE POWER OF CHRIST.

I. "All power is given Me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. xxviii. 18). Power is a characteristic of great men, and especially of God's servants. Our Lord, in His Humanity, necessarily possessed a supernatural power of doing great works and miracles. It belonged to Him as the greatest of mankind and the Father of the supernatural life in them; also because in Him the supernatural and the natural were united perfectly; also because it was the necessary means of manifesting to men His supernatural and divine office. This power, as exercised by the Sacred Humanity, was not divine omnipotence; still, He was able as man to do all that He desired. Either He had an inherent power from the Divinity to raise the dead, cure diseases, etc., or it may be that the power was granted by the Divinity in answer to the prayers and merits of the Humanity. This latter seems to be implied in Christ's words: "Father, I give Thee thanks that Thou hast heard Me; and I knew that Thou hearest Me always" (John xi. 41, 42). In any case it was a permanent power in Our Lord on account of the Divine Person of the Word which was united with His human nature; it was not like the miraculous powers of Moses, Elias and the saints, which were given to them occasionally for some special action which God moved them to do. Jesus is present always in His Church, and with you personally when in the state of grace. His power is communicated to you according to your needs. "He that believeth in Me, the works that I do he shall do also" (John xiv. 12). What perfect confidence and fearlessness this should give you!

II. Consider how Jesus Christ uses His power. 1. With great modesty. He concealed it often, forbade men to speak of it, and accompanied it with special humiliations, such as those which surrounded His birth and His death. We, on the other hand, value our talents and powers as the means

of asserting ourselves and impressing others with our superiority. 2. With benevolence towards men, gentleness, and utility. So Our Lord never used His power for punishment or destruction, except for the sake of the lesson of the barren fig tree. He would not destroy with fire from heaven the city that hardened its face against Him (Luke ix. 55). He would not use His power to gratify curiosity, by working wonders in the heavens or before Herod; nor for His own advantage by changing stones into bread, or descending from the cross. We always misuse our powers, from savage kings who must "wash their spears" periodically, to great nations with a "civilizing mission." 3. In submission to God and for His glory. "The Father who abideth in Me, He doth the works" (John xiv. 10). You have power of some sort: see that you use it for proper objects and motives like your divine model.

III. "Have confidence; I have overcome the world" (John xvi. 33). Power is not complete unless it crushes opposition and becomes predominant. Consider how Jesus Christ gained His victories. 1. By enduring without resistance all the misrepresentations and violence of His enemies, and emerging glorious and stronger than before. This is a greater manifestation of power than crushing violence by violence. 2. By converting His enemies, sinners. Every holy life, every soul saved, every act of virtue, is a triumph of Christ's power, for it proceeds from Him alone: "Without Me you can do nothing" (John xv. 5). 3. By judging. Having died for us and done all that was possible for us, Our Lord "hath been appointed by God to be the judge of the living and the dead" (Acts x. 42). This will be the final triumph of the power of Christ over obstinate sin, unbelief, blasphemy, immorality. In one mode or another "He must reign until He hath put all enemies under His feet" (1 Cor. xv. 25). All opposition will be reduced to eternal impotence, and those who ignored the power of Christ as Saviour will not escape from it in judgment. Seek for yourself and for the Church no other triumph but that of Christ.

12.—THE INFIRMITIES OF CHRIST.

I. "A man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity: and His look was, as it were, hidden and despised; whereupon we esteemed Him not" (Isa. liii. 3). Our Lord was all this, notwithstanding the perfection and power of the hypostatic union. It might have been expected that the Divine Nature in Him would have communicated all possible perfections and immunities to the human nature. In fact the Sacred Humanity was elevated and enriched by the communication of many extraordinary gifts, and it was also the most perfect and beautiful example of human nature. Christ is believed to have been perfect in manly vigour, and grace, and strength, and form; "beautiful above the sons of men" (Ps. xliv. 3). He was free from such infirmities as were inconsistent with divine purity and glory; from all internal derangements and maladies, which are generally the result of personal or ancestral excesses. Otherwise the action of the Divinity upon Our Lord's body was suspended, and only for a moment did He permit it to be exercised, in His Transfiguration; its full effect came into operation only after the Ascension. Still there remained most of the afflictions of life; and Our Lord suffered most of our infirmities, in being subject to hunger and thirst, weariness and weakness, heat and cold and sleeplessness, violence and death. Suffer with willingness any infirmities that God sends you; be patient under ill-treatment or injustice; practise mortification, and surrender some of your comforts and rights in union with Our Lord.

II. Some persons might be inclined to think that the Divinity would have communicated to the human soul of Our Lord its own infinite knowledge, immutability, impassibility. But this could not be. Our Lord assumed

human nature with all its limitations and liabilities, including mental suffering and certain other infirmities. The ignorance, darkness, propension to evil which belong to the actual state of sin, Jesus did not take on Himself. But He had all our susceptibility to influences from the senses and imagination. His soul was affected by the depression from bodily privations, by the loss of His friends, as Lazarus, for instance, by separation from His beloved Mother, by the sight of her afflictions, by the ingratitude of those He came to save, by repugnance to suffering and death, by the hatred of the priests and Pharisees, the unbelief and thoughtlessness of His Apostles. He suffered the emotions of love and sorrow, fear and aversion, pity, and even anger. But these were not like our passions: they did not tend to excess and sin, they were not rebellious against reason and law. Think how much Our Lord must have thus suffered beyond what has been recorded. When you suffer such things remember that He endured them too, and unite yourself with Him.

III. Thus Our Redeemer resigned for us as much as He could of the advantages which His Divinity might have conferred upon Him. He appears on the cross to have allowed His human nature to be deprived of the tranquillity and happiness accruing from the Beatific Vision. So we may judge from the words, "My God! My God! Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matt. xxvii. 46). All this He did: 1. To compensate for our sins of pride, insatiable selfishness, excessive indulgence, insistence on our supposed rights. 2. To complete the reality of His human nature in every detail, so that we may know Him to be with us in all our troubles. 3. That He may "feel compassion on them that are ignorant and err, because He also is encompassed with infirmities" (Heb. v. 2). 4. To give us an example of the practice of virtue in despite of suffering. Whatever you suffer, Jesus suffered infinitely more. Imitate Him in these details.

13.—THE SINLESSNESS OF CHRIST.

I. One of the singular glories of Our Lord's Humanity is that He is "holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Heb. vii. 26). This supreme quality of holiness and sinlessness proceeds in the first instance from the union of the Divine Person of the Word with the Humanity. That fact necessarily perfects the human nature of the same Person beyond all conception The body and soul of Jesus Christ are the body and soul of God the Son. That Divine Person guides and rules them and acts through them with infinite perfection and holiness. The Sacred Humanity of Our Lord is therefore holy and spotless beyond the holiness of all angels and men, and beyond the holiness of the Immaculate Virgin, although she was absolutely stainless in every respect. Our Blessed Lord, as man, is then the supreme work of God's creative power, beyond which nothing can be more perfect and holy. Not only is this most glorious to God, but it is a great glory to the human race that God should have conferred on it such a distinction, not granted even to the angels. We have all a share in this dignity: for the human race, taken in its entirety as including Jesus Christ, presents a sum of holiness surpassing even that of the whole host of heaven. You individually, when free from sin, and especially in Holy Communion, have a share in that holiness. Take care never to lose this privilege by mortal sin.

II. A second thing which makes a soul incapable of sin is the sight of God, which confers beatitude. This was the case with the Sacred Humanity. From the first moment of its human existence the soul of Christ enjoyed the Beatific Vision; it had attained from the first to its final aim and object, the fruition of the Divine Essence. Two

things are involved in this, the clear vision of God and perfect love of Him. The soul, knowing and possessing the supreme good, cannot be deluded into choosing anything inferior, and still less anything contradictory, in its stead. Perfected love, further, cannot hate God, or, which is the same thing, cannot love that which is repugnant to Him. If you sin, it is because you do not know God thoroughly, because you do not see Him with the sight of vivid faith, or because you do not love Him above all things. The practical result of religion is to keep you sinless, and make you by degrees more holy, by promoting in you, first, a fuller knowledge, and then a fuller love of the supreme good. Strengthen these in your soul till "neither death nor life . . . nor things present, nor things to come . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus Our Lord" (Rom. viii. 38, 39).

III. Another thing that restrains from sin is a clear knowledge of the nature of sin, its enormity, and foulness; and this is dependent on our knowledge of God. We know these things, during this life, more by the testimony of God than by direct evidence, so that their reality does not come home to us. Our Lord alone had perfect knowledge. He could see the surpassing horror of sin and the misery it involves, more than the blessed do in heaven or the lost in hell. He saw it as the deadly enemy and the antithesis of His Divinity. He hated it beyond all things, and was infinitely removed from it. He could see that which is so close to us and so dear to us, but which would kill us with horror if we could only glance beneath the veil of pretended goodness and deceptive pleasure which hides its real character. He knows that all the pains of hell apart from sin would be a less misery than the presence of one mortal sin in the soul. Hence He hates it with a necessary and eternal hatred. Strive to realize these truths, and acquire the spirit of Christ, so as to be ready to do all things and suffer all things rather than consent to a single mortal sin.

14.—THE WILL OF CHRIST.

I. Our Lord, being fully human, had amongst other prerogatives that of liberty and freedom of will. This was much more perfect than in us; it had greater range and power; it was not weakened and misdirected by mere physical impulses. 1. Our Lord could not sin. But this was not a restriction of His freedom; it was exemption from slavery to the domination of the body. His sinlessness was His freedom. So it is with us. A man of high principle and sense of honour, who has associated with others of like character, cannot do a foul dishonourable action; and in this he is not the less a free agent, but he has a fuller liberty than the man who is led away by bad company, ignorance and weakness to act basely or fraudulently. 2. Our Lord was necessarily obedient to His heavenly Father and subject to Him; but this again was an exercise of liberty, for it was the result not of compulsion but of deliberate choice. He suffered and died in obedience to His Father; "as the Father hath given Me commandment so I do" (John xiv. 31). But also it is written: "He was offered because it was His own will" (Isa. liii. 7); and again: "I lay down My life . . . and I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. This commandment I have received from My Father" (John x. 17-18). There is no true freedom without subordination. Your highest liberty consists in willing subjection to the supremacy of God.

II. Our Lord's human will is admirable for its unswerving conformity to the divine will. For instance in the Garden of Gethsemani Jesus asks that the chalice may be removed from Him if possible, but at once His will conforms itself to the will of His Father (Luke xxii. 42). The will of Christ exercised this virtue of conformity: 1, in eliciting all the acts demanded of it by the Father; 2, in acting upon

the same principles and with the same motives as the Divine will; 3, in desiring the same immediate objects as the Father; 4, in seeking the same general end and object in all particulars, *viz.*, the greater glory of God. The same is the rule of perfection for your will. It has two functions, to command and to obey. Like all things else in creation, it has to render and receive service, to rule and to be ruled. It stands between the most perfect will of God, which is above it, and the irregular desires of the sensitive appetites below it. Of these it is written, "the lust thereof shall be beneath Thee, and Thou shalt have dominion over it" (Gen. iv. 7); but in order to have this power, the will must be subject to the supreme will of God. Too often men reverse this order; they revolt against the divine will, and render slavish obedience to degrading lusts.

III. Another important quality of the human will of Jesus Christ is an intense and burning charity, "which surpasseth all knowledge" (Eph. iii. 19), exhibited towards God and men. Love is one of the predominant perfections of God, operating within the Holy Trinity, and externally towards all His creatures, and towards man in particular. In God, love sums up all His goodness towards us; in man, love sums up the observance of all laws regarding God and our fellow-men. This predominated consequently in Our Lord both as God and as man. It inspired all His action, whether for the glory of His Father or for our redemption. We recognize love in its earthly form as the most universal, irresistible, generous and beautiful of emotions. In Jesus Christ it was infinitely more. It moved Him to annihilate Himself, in a manner, for us; to come from heaven, lay aside the glory of the Divinity, and suffer every indignity and cruelty. Love is the perfection of your will also: it ought to be the motive power of your life. But it must be well-ordered and holy. It must take its rise in God, and extend thence to men. We must love them for God's sake, and as Jesus loved them.

15.—THE MERITS OF CHRIST.

I. Every good action has its proper effect towards God and towards ourselves; it makes compensation for our bad deeds, and it obtains favours from God in reward; it is satisfactory and it is meritorious. The human acts of Jesus Christ had all the conditions which give that character to our actions. 1. He placed Himself in our present stage of trial and preparation for the next life. 2. He possessed human liberty. 3. He was in the state of grace. 4. He had received that which makes merit possible for us, *viz.*, the divine promise of reward. "If He shall lay down His life for sin He shall see a long-lived seed, and the will of the Lord shall be prosperous in His hand" (Isa. liii. 10). The divine actions of Our Lord could not remain sterile, but produced an adequate effect. Those actions proceeded from an infinite and most holy Person; they were wrought in a human nature which had been assumed and sanctified by the Divinity; each action received its character and value, not from its visible importance in the mundane order of things, but from the source that produced it, and the intensity of the motives and sentiments that acted through it. And thus a single drop of the Precious Blood, a single action, prayer, or thought of Christ was of infinite value, both satisfactory and meritorious, and was capable of expiating the sins of mankind, and purchasing grace and glory for the whole world. Admire the infinite treasures of Our Lord's life, and thank Him for placing them at your disposal.

II. Satisfaction and merit are qualities which belong to human actions; they do not belong to the actions of the Divinity. Our Lord, therefore, did not satisfy and merit for us by those actions which proceeded exclusively from His Divine nature, such as the Beatific Vision and the divine love

and enjoyment of the Divine Essence. It was His human actions that were meritorious, and they were so in the highest degree, both as regarded Himself and mankind. This is indicated by the Apostle: "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore also God hath exalted Him" (Phil. ii. 8, 9). This merit belonged to every one of His virtues, prayers, and sufferings; and also to the commonest actions of His domestic life at Nazareth. But we attribute His satisfaction and merits rather to His Passion and Death, as being the crowning events of His life and the manifestation of Him in His highest office as Priest and Victim of Sacrifice. It is by communication with Our Lord that we receive the power of really satisfying and meriting by our good works. Actually and in themselves they are worthless apart from Him. Make use of this power by offering all your actions to God.

III. Merit and satisfaction belong to the deeds of this present life only, and cease as soon as we enter eternity. Our Lord merited, therefore, by every action, but during the present life only. St. Paul speaks of the beginning of His meritorious works: coming "into the world He saith, Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldest not, but a body Thou hast fitted to Me . . . then said I, Behold I come" (Heb. x. 5, 7). Our Lord speaks of the ending of His time for meriting: "I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work" (John ix. 4). In heaven Our Lord satisfies and merits no longer; He continues only the offering of the inexhaustible satisfaction and merit accomplished by Him on earth. His life-time here was sufficient. Short as it was, it was the fullest and richest epoch in the world's history, for "being made perfect in a short space He fulfilled a long time" (Wisd. iv. 13). You are able to merit by every action of your life. By fervour and love you can make the smallest things great, and in the sight of God fulfil a long time in a few years.

16.—FOR WHOM CHRIST MERITED

I. In accordance with the law of the nature He had assumed, the Son of God, acting as man, merited for Himself. It was to His glory, as it is to ours, to earn the recompense, to win the victory at the point of the sword, to be crowned for striving lawfully (2 Tim. ii. 5). Therefore it is written: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory?" (Luke xxiv. 26). There were certain things which were not merited by Our Lord for Himself. The Hypostatic Union, for instance, His essential beatitude, His habitual grace and knowledge were bestowed on Him at first as prerogatives proper to His condition. Christ's human actions rendered a service of glory to God and merited glory for Him in return. Therefore He says: "I have glorified Thee on earth . . . and now glorify Thou Me, O Father" (John xvii. 4, 5). He glorified the Father by preaching His name, by manifesting Him in His own life, by obeying His commands, by attributing His own great works to His Father's power. He merited thereby what He received: the glorification of His Humanity in the Resurrection and Ascension, the power of miracles that proved Him to be the Son of God, the faith and adoration of the elect, the office of Judge which He will exercise at the end. Rejoice in the full justice that has been done to your Lord by His Father, and say: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and benediction" (Apoc. v. 12).

II. It is generally held that Our Lord as man merited for the angels the grace and glory bestowed on them, and that He is the Author of their salvation through the Father's prevision of His merits to come. The words said of mankind are considered to include the angels: "of His fulness we all have received, and grace for grace" (John i. 16). The angels, equally with this world, were created by the

Eternal Father through His Divine Word, the Second Person. This Word of God is in His human nature "head of all principality and power" (Col. ii. 10); and, therefore, such things as were superadded to the angelic nature may well be conceived as conferred on it through the merits of the Word made flesh. The same meaning seems to be conveyed by another passage: Thou "hast set Him over the works of Thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under His feet. For in that He subjected all things to Him, He left nothing not subject to Him" (Heb. ii. 7, 8). What a beautiful harmony of all things! The spiritual and the material universe are brought together in one unity of plan, under the prevalence of one law, by this subjection to Jesus Christ.

III. Our Lord Jesus Christ also merited for mankind all that they possess of supernatural good, and a great deal of their natural advantages. He does this as being the principal member of the great corporate society of humanity, in which the rest of us constitute the smaller and subordinate portion. We share in the advantages which He brings to that society. "Blessed be God . . . who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. i. 3). So we receive through Our Lord the first grace that calls us to faith and repentance, then sanctification and perfection, the strength to persevere to the end, and lastly our reward in glory. He is the beginning and the end of everything for us; "without Me you can do nothing" (John xv. 5). God demands our service; we have to struggle and fight; we must earn and merit our reward; but it is Our Lord who gives us power to do all these things, and He serves, and struggles, and merits in us. Consider how much you individually have received through the merits of Christ, and give Him thanks. Consider the little you have done, and recognize that it was through Him. Consider how much you ought to do, and be certain that you can do it all in Him that strengtheneth you.

17.—THE SUBJECTION OF CHRIST.

I. Consider the successive descents and subjections of Jesus Christ for our sake. His Humanity was a creature of God, and so, of necessity, dependent on the supreme dominion of its Creator. The Divinity is over all, and loses none of its rights over the work of its hand even though it be united to the Humanity. Christ speaking in His human nature says therefore: "the Father is greater than I" (John xiv. 28). Our Lord then was subject to the natural and supernatural, moral and spiritual law. To the ceremonial law of God given by Moses, Christ was not properly subject, as being the Messias, the legislator, and the founder of a new dispensation. He submitted, however, out of respect to a law that had come from God, out of humility concealing His dignity, in order to give us an example. He submitted Himself further to obedience to the death of the cross under the law of His Father's will, and the law of charity towards us. The subjection of Christ was a lowering of Himself, but it exalted the Divinity in the person of the Father. An infinite Person became in His human nature the first subject of God; and for the first time God received His full due, infinite service of adoration and love. How great are the results of humility! Put off all your self-sufficiency for the sake of God, forego all elevation in your own esteem and in the esteem of others; it is little indeed to offer to God, but it will cost you much, and it will honour Him still more. It is the only way in which you can exalt Him.

II. Our Lord made Himself not merely the subject but the servant of His Father. "He debased Himself, taking the form of a servant" (Phil. ii. 7). He descended from the throne of the Divinity, put aside the dignity of Son, covered His glory with our degrading garb, gave up His own will, and devoted Himself to a life of lowliness and obedience. In this He made compensation to the Father for our refusal

of service, He took the place of humanity, fulfilled its duties, and saved it from the chastisement of its rebellion. For the first time the fulness of service which God demanded, and which His greatness required from man, was rendered to Him. The offending race, in requital for the service of their head and chief member, are received back by the Father, not merely as servants, but as sons. Our Lord, further, is not content with this abasement, but makes Himself our servant, enduring our humours, waiting on our pleasure, allowing us to dictate terms to Him. As for His faithful followers, "He will gird Himself, and make them sit down to meat, and passing, will minister to them" (Luke xii. 37); for obstinate sinners He is ready to do much more in order to gain them. Put off that pride which revolts against all subjection even to God. Offer yourself to be the lowliest in the house of God; be ready to serve all others for His sake.

III. "Thou hast made Me to serve with thy sins; thou hast wearied Me with thy iniquities" (Isa. xliii. 24). Mankind, refusing honourable service in the house of God, have fallen into a most real and degrading slavery to material nature and to the passions; they have lost their spiritual liberty, and the dignity which ought to belong to free beings, and the beauty of noble life. Our Lord could not enter into this degradation; none are the slaves of sin but those who commit it. But He took on Himself the outward stigma of slavery, to save us from the reality. He was poor and in labour from His youth, and that labour was the ignominious one of cleansing this world from its filthiness. He had no possessions of His own, no home. He was sold for the price of a slave, was clothed as a buffoon and exposed to derision. He was scourged like a slave, and suffered the death of a slave. What He endured ought to have been your lot for ever; you deserved it, and except for Our Lord's substitution of Himself for you, you would have had to endure it.

18.—THE PRAYER OF CHRIST.

1. The Gospels remind us continually of the long, frequent, and fervent prayers of Our Lord. This is meant for our example, and we should learn to consider prayer as the most pressing and important of our duties. It was necessary even for the Son of God as man. As being bound by the laws of human life, He had to exercise the virtue of Religion with its different forms of service towards God. Prayer is the ordinary means of securing the blessing of God on our work and graces for ourselves; Our Lord made use of it, therefore, for the promotion of His work of preaching and miracles, just as He made use of food for the support of His life in accordance with natural law. Prayer was also a function of Our Lord's office as Priest, Pontiff, and Mediator; those offices still continue in heaven, wherefore He is represented to us as "at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. viii. 34). The example of Our Divine Master shows us that prayer is one of the most necessary of our duties; first, as a homage to God; secondly, as the accompaniment of every one of our undertakings, to secure its success, especially if it be of a spiritual nature; thirdly, as a most precious privilege which admits us to intimate communication with God; fourthly, as a source of grace, strength, comfort and guidance under all circumstances.

II. Consider the qualities and virtues exhibited by Our Lord in His prayer. 1. Reverence. "Who in the days of His flesh, offering up prayers and supplications with a strong cry and tears . . . was heard for His reverence" (Heb. v. 7). 2. Fervour, arising from His perfect vision of the

Father and knowledge of our necessities, from His burning love of God and men, and His ardent desire to obtain what He petitioned for. 3. Confidence, which He manifested when He said while yet praying, "Father, I give Thee thanks that Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always" (John xi. 41, 42). 4. Perseverance. Jesus continued often the whole night in prayer, and once for forty days, and in Gethsemani He returned three times and used the self-same words. Attend carefully to the manner of your prayer. If one of these qualities is deficient, you are asking amiss, and cannot expect to obtain anything from God. Every effect must have an adequate cause; and as the favour you ask is greater, so must your prayer be more prolonged, more fervent, more confident, more capable of standing the severe test which God often imposes on the faith of petitioners.

III. The prayer of Our Lord was supremely efficacious, according to the foregoing words, "I knew that Thou hearest Me always" (John xi. 42). What He willed and prayed for was also the will of His Father, and was infallibly carried out. He prayed for all mankind, and died to obtain for them the sufficient means of salvation. Every soul, therefore, in some way or other receives those sufficient graces; after that, their actual salvation depends upon their own free-will, which cannot be forced. Our Lord prayed especially for certain persons and objects; for the unbroken unity of His Church, its preservation from the taint of error, its endowment with all truth, its stability, perpetuity, and infallibility. Those prayers were necessarily heard, for they are contained in what God promised: "Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the Gentiles for Thy inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for Thy possession" (Ps. ii. 8). Your prayer too, when properly conditioned, will possess infallible efficacy, according to Our Lord's words, "Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John xvi. 24)

19.—THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.

I. "The Lord hath sworn and He will not repent: Thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedec" (Ps. cix. 4). The priesthood used to be attached to the primogeniture; it belongs, therefore, to Our Lord, the first-born of mankind; and it is His office to offer supreme worship to the Creator on behalf of all. He was, further, appointed to offer the great sacrifice for sins by the shedding of His blood on Calvary. This priesthood is "for ever," because the oblation continues for ever in heaven and on earth. The Apostle saw "in the midst of the throne . . . a lamb standing as it were slain" (Apoc. v. 6.); and Christ "offering one sacrifice for sins, for ever sitteth on the right hand of God" (Heb. x. 12). The eternal sacrifice as it goes on amongst us, is, according to the order of Melchisedec, under the forms of bread and wine. This is the "clean oblation" (of flour), which the prophet said would be offered among the Gentiles in every place, from the rising of the sun to its setting (Mal. i. 11). Venerate Our Lord as the eternal Priest, always offering the sacrifice of the Mass, invisibly but really, and inviting you to be present at it. There is no event so holy or so efficacious on earth; nothing that corresponds so exactly with the actual facts of heaven.

II. Our Lord is also the great High Priest and Pontiff. In fulfilment of the Old Testament type, He offered His sacrifice in the outer court of this world; and then, leaving the priests still ministering at the altar, He has gone within the veil that shrouds the majesty of God in the true Holy of Holies. There, with the blood of sacrifice upon His hands, He continues the same oblation that was commenced

and still goes on in the outer court. Jesus is High Priest also in relation to the multitude of consecrated priests of the New Law. They are His ministers and instruments, not of a new sacrifice, for there can be no other; nor of a repetition of the same, "for this He did once, offering Himself" (Heb. vii. 27); but they are appointed to give visible form, in every place, on every day, to the one sacrifice which the High Priest is ever engaged in offering. They act in His name, they speak His words, but He is really the Priest of the sacrifice exerting His supreme power through them. Admire the wisdom and power which God has exercised in so arranging this mystery that you may be able to assist at it as though on Calvary. Thank Him for this.

III. "It was fitting that we should have such a High Priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Heb. vii. 26). 1. We need such a one that He may be able to stand between us and God as Mediator, and atone for our sins. 2. We need a Victim also of infinite value for the sacrifice, and such also is our great Pontiff. 3. We need to have a form of sacrifice always amongst us, in order that the perfect religion may find its expression in that form which is the characteristic ceremony of religion. 4. We crave to be personally present at such an act, and not merely to know as a matter of history that it once took place. 5. We need such a form of worship as will bind the systems of the Old Testament and the New into one. The ancient law offered a symbolic sacrifice prophetic of the Crucifixion; we recall it daily in a mystic sacrifice. 6. We need a form of worship of divine institution, invariable through the ages, the same in all lands, which will express the unity of God and of religion, and bind our souls into one. All this God has given you through the sacred priesthood of Our Lord. What treasures of truth, and beauty, and utility are therein contained! Make full use of your privileges.

20.—THE ROYALTY OF CHRIST.

I. Jesus Christ is not only our Pontiff in spirituals, He is King and supreme ruler of mankind in temporals; because "there is no power but from God" (Rom. xiii. 1); and secondly because He is actually our King; He is "Prince of the Kings of the earth" (Apoc. i. 5). He Himself says, "All power is given Me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. xxviii. 18), and again, "I am appointed King by Him over Sion, His holy mountain" (Ps. ii. 6). Our Lord has all the qualities which go to the making of kings. He is of noble descent, being Son of God, He is the first-born of all mankind, He surpasses all in power and in qualities of body and soul, He has conquered His rights by delivering the world from its previous slavery and disorganization, and He is the founder of a new social order and a new civilization. He is also Son of David, the King of the chosen people, which had primacy over all nations, to be their blessing and their salvation. The Father gave Him not only the Jews but all mankind, according to His word: "I will give Thee the Gentiles for Thy inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for Thy possession" (Ps. ii. 8). His rights, therefore, over us are temporal as well as spiritual, even though many refuse to admit them. The two things cannot be separated; for our internal and external life, although different, constitute one human life; the prosperity of the one is interwoven with that of the other; and the influences of religion and morality penetrate all our actions—domestic, industrial, and political. Honour your King with the service both of body and soul. Let His law rule your whole life in every branch of it.

II. Our Lord's Kingdom is not indeed *of* this world, but it is a real kingdom *in* this world. He has separated the Priestly and the Royal functions and placed them in different hands. In the spiritual order He has Himself appointed His representative, and one universal, unvarying form of

administration. But not so in the civil order. Centralization and uniformity would not meet the requirements of human life. Men have to work out their worldly destinies for themselves under God's direction and assistance, according to their different circumstances, but in accordance with revealed principles of action. They have liberty to obey or disobey these. The human apparatus of compulsion does not belong to Christ's Kingdom—armies, police, tribunals, prisons. He appeals to the good-will of His subjects, by exhortation, by inward grace, by love, and also by threats of future consequences. His Kingdom is, in the first instance, in the souls of men, and thence it extends to their outward life. Thus He designed to establish on earth a universal kingdom, guided by faith, cemented together with love, abounding, first in spiritual, and then in temporal benediction. In spite of the extensive rejection of the Royalty of Christ, the faithful few still form a world-wide kingdom, and reap many of its benefits.

III. "The nation and the kingdom that will not serve Thee shall perish" (Isa. lx. 12). Our King, in giving His law, knew what was best adapted to human life, and necessary for its success. Under His laws the order of humanity would be as perfect and beautiful as the order of the material creation. If we disobey the instructions of the maker of powerful machinery we must expect some great catastrophe, and we deserve it. By disobeying the divine laws of human organization we lose control of the enormous destructive forces of the perverted human will, and our imperfect makeshifts cannot avert the calamitous consequences. Hence, among the highest creatures of God and the best endowed, we find so much failure, retrogression, hopeless degradation. As their capacities are increased, so do their miseries increase. There is one cause of all these evils; it is that men have thrust aside their King, His law and His grace. Your duty is to resist the rising tide of evil, to help the cause of good and happiness, by fidelity to Christ the King, and by promoting His reign.

21.—THE SONSHIP OF CHRIST.

I. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God, not by adoption, in any sense of the word, but by nature. Adoption is the gratuitous assumption of a person who is not a relative, to bring him into the family and entitle him to an inheritance. This cannot be said of Our Blessed Lord. He has the two natures: the divine, which He possessed from all eternity; the human, which He took so many years ago; the one is of the substance of the Father, the other is of the substance of the Blessed Virgin Mary. But it is the one indivisible Person who exists in both these natures, and the same who is Son of God and Himself God, is also Son of Mary. St. Paul draws out for us this divine dignity of Jesus Christ. God, he says, "in these days hath spoken to us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the world: who being in the splendour of His glory, and the figure of His substance . . . sitteth on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. i. 2, 3). We adore Our Lord, therefore, with supreme worship as being true God of true God; and we venerate the unparalleled dignity of her who, being Mother of the Son of God, was also Mother of God. Adore Our Lord profoundly, especially when you enter His presence, for the sublime dignity which belongs to Him in His Divinity and His Humanity.

II. Our Lord Jesus Christ, as man, bore Himself with all respect, love and obedience towards His heavenly Father. He manifested God to us in that character, which hitherto had been unknown. God had been, during the old dispensation, the Lord of hosts, mighty and terrible, ready to punish every transgression. Our Lord, as His Son, was able to take a new attitude towards Him and teach it to us. The

Infinite Majesty is always Father towards Him; and the same sentiments that He exhibits towards His only-begotten Son He feels also towards us. In return, Jesus shows us how we should comport ourselves towards Our Father in heaven. He showed obedience by carrying out His Father's will to the death on the cross; He died as an exhibition also of love for the Father, that the world might know and imitate it. Every action of His life had as its object the manifestation and the glory of His Father. These duties are yours. See how you fulfil each one of them. See whether you live always as considering God to be your Father, and yourself to be His son.

III. "God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the law . . . that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. iv. 4, 5). The Son of God became Son of man so as to make all of us sons of God. We were outcasts, criminals under sentence of punishment, absolutely devoid of any claim to supernatural grace or heavenly glory, "by nature the children of wrath" (Eph. ii. 3). Now we have become children of God, not indeed by nature, but by adoption, on account of Jesus Christ being our brother in the flesh. So we are made "sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 17). By this adoption we acquire the likeness to God which children have to their parents. First, sanctifying grace is poured out in our souls, and God dwells in us, forming in us a preliminary resemblance. Our duty next is to make this more perfect by the exercise of good works, which constitute a practical and active resemblance to God. From these two proceed the final transformation into the image of God by the addition of the life of glory. Then "we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is" (1 John iii. 2). Thus we attain to the final results of the Incarnation. Humanity is inconceivably elevated, first in Jesus Christ, and by Him in us. He accomplishes it; but you must share in His works if you are to have your full share in His dignity.

22.—THE PREDESTINATION OF CHRIST.

I. "Jesus Christ, who was predestinated Son of God in power, according to the spirit of sanctification, by the resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead" (Rom. i. 4). All things were foreseen and ordained by God from eternity; so Our Lord, as being man, was predestined like the rest of His race. He was to be the first-born of humanity, the father of all supernatural life, both to the generations following Him and to those preceding Him; and all the rest of mankind were predestined after Him, and with relation to Him. There was a double predestination in Jesus Christ. It was first predestined that the Sacred Humanity should be united personally with the Word of God; and this, not in consequence of its being merited by the works and virtues of Christ, but by the infinite bounty of God. Secondly, it was decreed that He should not remain for ever in the suffering stage of human nature, bearing our afflictions, but that He should be raised from the dead and glorified by the exhibition of divine power, and that He should occupy as man the first place in heaven. This predestination had reference to Christ's deeds and merits, as the reward earned thereby. Rejoice with Our Lord that His name is the first one written in the Book of Life; pray that yours may be written there after His, and strive to make it so.

II. "He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy . . . who hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ unto Himself . . . He made us acceptable through His beloved Son" (Eph. i. 4-6). According to this passage, the predestination of Our Lord is the occasion and the source of ours. As the world in all its evolutions was pre-

pared for the sake of man, so are the elect prepared for Christ, to lead up to Him as the perfection of humanity to glorify Him by multiplying His likeness, and to form a court around His majesty here and hereafter. "All things are yours . . . and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. iii. 22, 23). Further, we are predestined in Our Lord, and not by ourselves or for ourselves. We have no claim of our own and no merits by ourselves, but only as His brethren, and as members of His body. As all things were created through the Word of God, so it is through the Incarnate Word, the Image of the Father on earth, that all of us are created anew to the life of grace and glory. Recognize that without Him you are nothing, and that in Him you are everything both here and hereafter. Take care that you never allow yourself to be separated from Him by unbelief or sin.

III. The Predestination of Christ is further the exemplar of ours, and explains its method. 1. Our Lord received the grace of the Hypostatic Union in advance of His merits; but His heavenly glory as the reward of the merits operated in that union. So we receive from God the grace of our first enlightenment and vocation without any effort of our own; but the subsequent increase of grace and light, our further progress, and our final glorification depend on the use we make of grace and light, on our own fidelity and exertions in union with God's assistance. 2. We also learn that our Lord's merits and glory are closely associated with suffering. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory?" (Luke xxiv. 26). So also it must be with us. We are "predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son" (Rom. viii. 29), not only in glory, but in the means by which He entered into it. God requires of you not only action but endurance. Nerve yourself for suffering, and welcome it for the benefits it brings. "Labour the more that by good works you may make sure your vocation and election" (2 Pet. i. 10).

23.—THE WORSHIP DUE TO CHRIST.

I. "He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Most High" (Luke i. 32). The homage we pay to any one is proportioned to his eminence and greatness. Christ Our Lord is great in every respect. 1. In His natures, the Divinity, and a most perfect and holy Humanity. 2. In His power, for He can do all that He desires in heaven and on earth. 3. In His qualities, which are the Divine Perfections, and the highest degree of all human virtues, splendour, beauty, benevolence, justice. 4. In His relations, to God first, as a Person of the Blessed Trinity, and then to creatures, as their King, Priest, Teacher, and as Son of a Virgin Mother. 5. In His activities, the internal ones of intellect and heart, and His external ones of miracles and beneficence. 6. In the variety of the sufferings of His Passion and their effects. 7. In His possessions, for all things are His. 8. In every place; in His Blessed Mother, at Bethlehem, in the lowliness of Nazareth even, in the temple, on the cross and in death, in His descent to hell, and on the right hand of His Father. 9. In every time; for before Abraham and the world were made He was. He was great in anticipation and prophecy, greater still abiding and working in His Church. 10. One thing remains, that He be magnified in you, and His greatness be shown in its effects on your life. "Now also shall Christ be magnified in my body" (Phil. i. 20). For this greatness He depends on your good-will.

II. "Wherefore also God hath exalted Him, and hath given Him a name that is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow" (Phil. ii. 9, 10). God has made Jesus to be served and venerated by every creature; and the veneration due to Him is that of supreme and divine adoration. He is God and Man together. If the Humanity were separable from the Divinity it would not be adorable with divine worship. But such subtlety of

distinction is not allowable or possible. Jesus Christ is one person only; we cannot separate the divine and the human nature as if they were distinct entities, and pay a different kind of homage to each. Christ is to be venerated as "true God of true God" whether we consider Him in the divine nature as Son of God, or in the human nature as the Son of Man and the Son of Mary. In Him we adore the Divinity directly, and the Humanity by concomitance, as possessing the prerogatives of the one Divine Person who supports both natures. Our love and attachment are, however, elicited rather by the qualities exhibited in that nature "which we have seen with our eyes, which we have diligently looked upon, and our hands have handled" (1 John i. 1). Be careful to pay to Jesus in every way, in attitude, in thought, in word, the adoration which is His due.

III. Those who recognize the ineffable greatness and beauty of Our Lord will, like Moses, pay Him the homage of desiring earnestly to see His face. "If therefore I have found favour in Thy sight, show me Thy face that I may know Thee" (Ex. xxxiii. 13). They will picture Him in their imagination. They will love to have before their eyes something that will remind them constantly of Him. The representations of Him by statues or pictures, as an infant or as dying on the Cross, will be found on the walls of their houses, or in the open country, or worn upon their person, testifying to the faith, and love, and desire that are in them. The fullest representation of Christ is found in our brethren, who are His brethren, and especially in the poor, the abandoned and the suffering. We must recognize His lineaments in them, and even in our enemies; we must remember that what we do to them He considers as done to Himself, and that so we can testify our homage and love towards Him, and make Him a return for what He has done for us. Let this thought guide you in all your relations with your fellow-men.

24.—THE OFFICES OF CHRIST. 1.

I. Jesus Christ is our *Redeemer;* that is He has paid the price of our ransom, He has bought us out of slavery to sin and Satan, and has restored us to liberty, honour, and the enjoyment of our supernatural inheritance. These advantages mankind had lost through the sin of Adam and each one's personal sins. They had lost the dignity of the supernatural life with the true freedom that belongs to it. They were incapable of executing the commands that God had given, and so were not fully under His dominion. They had chosen a lower state at the suggestion of Satan, and had placed themselves on the side of evil against the supreme good. Their natural forces had been corrupted and weakened; they had laid themselves open to temptations, and had less vigour to resist them. They were demoralized by their subjection, and were incapable of throwing off the yoke and asserting themselves against a triumphant enemy. They knew nothing of a nobler state, and did not even desire it. And all this was the prelude to eternal slavery and the overwhelming miseries of hell. Such was the thoroughly wretched and hopeless condition of all men. From this we have been "bought with a great price" (1 Cor. vi. 29), *viz.*, the Incarnation and Death of Jesus Christ. None other could have delivered us: hence He is our sole Redeemer. Be careful that you do not "neglect so great salvation" (Heb. ii. 3); like many who love their chains, who will not submit to the conditions which the higher state requires, and who trample on the blood of their Redemption.

II. Jesus is also "the one *Mediator* of God and men" (1 Tim. ii. 5). Sin had intervened between God and men to separate them eternally. "Your iniquities have divided between you and God" (Isa. lix. 2). Satan was by this means a mediator of evil; and also because in his qualities he is between God and men, like Him in immortality and spiritual being, like us in sin and misery. Nothing less than

an infinite mediation was required to intervene between God and man and unite them again, breaking down the wall of separation between them. Jesus Christ is the one and only possible Mediator: 1, by nature, because He shares at once in the divine and human nature, and so unites together in His person two things infinitely distant; 2, by office, because He alone has the power, through His atonement, of bridging over the infinite gulf opened by sin, and reconciling man to God. You must imitate Christ the Mediator, in these qualities. You must unite the divine and the human in your life; and you must mediate in your lowly way, trying to diffuse light and goodness in the world, and to bring sinners to the knowledge and love of God, and so to reconciliation with Him.

III. Jesus Christ is our *Head*. "He hath made Him head over all the church, which is His body" (Eph. i. 23). By His Redemption and Mediation, Christ has become our Spiritual Head, and the elect are the body, subordinate to Him. He is the highest and most honourable portion of that body, the brain which directs it, the centre to which all things converge, the source whence all motion and activity proceed. Christ founded the Church of the elect, gave it life, organization, doctrine and laws. He gives it the continual nourishment of grace in the seven sacraments. He abides with it all days, even to the end of the world, preserving it from the death of error and of extinction, purifying and reviving it constantly, securing its infallibility and indefectibility, and finally transforming it from the militant and suffering state into its final and permanent state of triumph. All this He did "that He might sanctify it . . . that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, nor any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. v. 26, 27). You are full of sins and imperfections now, and you will be until the end; but if you contend against them, suffer for them, and repent of them, you will still retain membership with the "glorious Church" and its Head.

25.—THE OFFICES OF CHRIST. 2.

I. Jesus is our *Light.* "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: to them that dwelt in the region of the shadow of death light is risen" (Isa. ix. 2). In consequence of the fall, our perception of truth has been obscured; error, ignorance, spiritual and mental darkness have prevailed. Redemption is an enlightenment, and Our Lord is the Light of the world. Without Him, in present as well as in past time, we are plunged in thickest darkness, we have no supernatural knowledge of God, and the natural knowledge of Him becomes erroneous. Many think now that passions, misery and death belong to man's nature and are ordained by God; that happiness consists in possessions and sensual gratifications; that violence, falsehood, injustice and lust are man's proper occupations and the irresistible needs of his being. No restraint is recognized but what is enforced by the state and its police, by convenience, public opinion, or "enlightened selfishness." Jesus, in His Church, by revealing Himself, the future life and the nature of sin, changes our views, and gives us new principles of action that will ensure our well-being in this world and in the next. "He that followeth Me walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John viii. 12). How happy you are, first in possessing a light otherwise unattainable, and then in having the firm assurance that you possess it! It is one of your greatest privileges. Be not unfaithful lest you lose it.

II. Jesus is also a warrior and *Conqueror.* He says by the Psalmist: "Thou hast girded Me with strength unto battle: Thou hast subdued under Me them that rose up against Me, and Thou hast destroyed them that hated Me" (Ps. xvii. 40, 41). We have an enemy, potent, crafty and cruel, far stronger than we are, better equipped; and he has the aid of traitors within our camp, *viz.*, our own perverse inclinations. He did not fear to attack the Eternal in heaven

and His Son on earth. He subdued man, and held him in degrading slavery. The warfare against him involved labour and privation, suffering and death to our Champion. Hell seemed to have overthrown Christ, when Jews and Gentiles combined to reject Him, and chose Satan as their master instead. But it was by that defeat that He gained His victory. He suffered all, and so delivered us. The bondage of Satan is broken, sin is abolished (for those who repent), men are enabled to resist temptation and defy the enormous powers of evil, and all who wish can escape from sin, and enter into glory with Our Lord. Thank Him for gaining so much for you, and at such a cost. But remember that you too have to fight if you wish to share in the victory of Christ. No man is "crowned unless he strive lawfully" (2 Tim. ii. 5).

III. Jesus is also our *Advocate*. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just" (1 John ii. 1). This is yet another aspect of Redemption. We may consider ourselves as criminals who have outraged their Sovereign deliberately, refused His mercies, and who have been justly condemned and handed over to the executioner. We have no excuse, we do not even deserve a hearing, we have no claim for pardon. But Our Lord pities us because our malice is in part the result of inherited misfortune, and He sees that many of us will at last be amenable to His love. He therefore pleads our cause, He makes full reparation, He appeases offended justice, and He moves the Judge to mercy. For every one of us He beseeches, as He did on the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke xxiii. 34). This office Our Lord continues in heaven, where His blood, shed on Calvary, is always making intercession for us, and never ceases until either His love or our obstinacy finally triumphs. Confess your unworthiness; make no excuses for yourself; do not allege your own merits; but rely exclusively on the powerful advocacy of Our Blessed Lord.

26.—THE NATIVITY.

I. After four thousand years of expectation, the moment arrived for the Messias to come from heaven and appear on earth to men. The words of the prophet were fulfilled: "The wilderness shall rejoice and shall flourish like the lily. It shall bud forth and blossom, and shall rejoice with joy and praise. . . . They shall see the glory of the Lord and the beauty of our God" (Isa. xxxv. 1, 2). The birth of Christ, like His conception, was miraculous; painless and pure like the budding of the lily or the first rays of the rising sun, as became the sanctity of God the Son and the virginal holiness of His Blessed Mother. The great event which all mankind looked for, and which kings and prophets had celebrated, occurred in profound peace, in the silence and obscurity of midnight. Without observation, the King of glory entered the world that He had made, with no witnesses but the ox and the ass, in the cave-stable of Bethlehem. The work of the sixth day of creation was finished by the birth of the chief member of the human race, the first-born of mankind. The great cycle of the universe was virtually completed. Slowly it had progressed from primeval energy to solid matter, from the inorganic to the organic, from the sentient being to the rational. Man had been the crown of creation, and now Christ became the crown of humanity. Everything converged upon Him; and in Him the universe, in the course of its evolution, came back to God whence it had originally proceeded. Adore God in this wonderful mystery, which holds so important a position in both the cosmical and the supernatural order.

II. Consider the sentiments of the Divine Infant. He was perfect in mind and body from the first moment of His existence; and He was fully conscious, and exercised His mental faculties, as He entered into this world. The Apostle describes His first acts: "Coming into the world He saith, Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldest not, but a

body Thou hast fitted to Me: holocausts for sin did not please Thee; then said I, Behold I come . . . that I should do Thy will, O God" (Heb. x. 5-7). Turning His gaze from God to man, His eyes fell first of all on the figure of the Blessed amongst women in adoration before Him. As God, He saw in her the chief work of His hand, the one human being never stained by sin, and perfectly pleasing in His sight. As Man He saw in her the first and most lasting object of human love, the Mother who gave Him life, and also the first fruits of His Redemption. The next to greet Him was the silent faithful man, selected by God as His guardian and foster-father, and then the shepherds representing the poor and simple whom He specially came to evangelize. Let the same be the order of your affections—the Eternal Father, the Son made man, the Virgin Mother, the special servants of God, the poor and lowly, and your other brethren.

III. The consideration of Our Lord's Nativity is not complete unless we give due prominence to her who was God's chief agent in the mystery. How can we picture to ourselves adequately her acts and sentiments in those first moments of ecstasy, when she saw before her, and took in her arms the expected Messias, the King of Israel, the Son of God! And He was her own Child, He was her beloved one, and she was His. He was to be the possession of the whole world, but in that hour she possessed Him to herself. She was the first to welcome Him. She had to represent the whole human race in receiving Him and paying Him homage. She had no grandeur or wealth, or even the common necessaries to offer; nothing but her sinless heart and the intensity of her adoration and love; and Jesus was satisfied, for it was a richer treasure and more acceptable welcome than all the kings, and priests, and populations of the earth could offer. Strive to enter into that Blessed Mother's sentiments, both of natural and of supernatural joy; unite with her in worship of her Divine Infant, join with Him in love for His Mother.

27.—THE CIRCUMCISION.

I. Circumcision was the outward sign of the ancient covenant between God and Abraham. It was a shedding of blood in punishment of sin, and an acknowledgment of the sinfulness of the race. The observers of it entered into the service of God by submitting to bear the burden of sin, and this by being washed in their own blood; and in consequence they became entitled to a share in the divine promises. God covenanted in return to give them a Messias who should shed His blood for the actual remission of their sins. By circumcision the Jews were spiritually incorporated into the chosen race, they became participants in special graces, and received a first charge on the universal covenant which was to succeed theirs. By this they received either the title to the future remission of original sin, or its actual remission in prevision of the merits of Christ. The Jewish covenant was temporary, it was the assurance of a promise yet to be fulfilled, and ceased when the prefigured Messias appeared. The promise was accomplished in Jesus Christ, and a new, abiding covenant has been made. The last of David's sons has been seated on an eternal throne, and reigns as King over the whole earth. We enter His kingdom and obtain the promise by being washed in His blood instead of our own. Thenceforth "they who are of the faith shall be blessed with faithful Abraham" (Gal. iii. 9). Thank God that He has allowed you to see this happy time, and take care to be faithful to your duties under the new covenant.

II. Jesus Christ was not subject to this law. He is the Legislator, and so is superior to His own law. He is the fulfilment of the promise, and so could have abrogated at once the ceremony which foretold it. He was the only human being who was sinless in His own right and by virtue of His own nature, so He needed not to go through the form of the remission of sin. But He submitted to the humilia-

tion. He would claim no privileges beyond the rest of those whom He had made His brethren. He would take on Himself all our liabilities, and make Himself, in external form, a sinner. "So it becometh us," He said, "to fulfil all justice" (Matt. iii. 15). How generous was this self-sacrifice! Our Lord gave up His rights, His privileges, His independence, He submitted to the control of law, to show His respect for all that proceeds from God. He did not assert His superior holiness, or shrink from consorting with His inferiors, but sacrificed His reputation in the sight of men. He sought no dispensation from common burdens, but bore even those that were unnecessary. His desire for suffering would not allow Him to wait for Calvary, but He hastened to shed His blood for us on the eighth day. How different is your conduct in these respects! Imitate the humility, resignation, mortification and generosity of Christ.

III. "Every man that circumciseth himself . . . is a debtor to do the whole law" (Gal. v. 3). Our Lord's circumcision was a new covenant with His Father. He bound Himself to close the Jewish dispensation by a divinely perfect observance of all its laws. He became a debtor to do the special law that was imposed on Him, of being crucified for our sins. The shedding of His blood was the consecration of its first fruits, and an earnest of the shedding of the last drop of it on the cross. In return, Our Lord received from His Father on that day the name of Jesus, and the office of Saviour signified by it, and the right of pre-emption over the whole human race. "I will give Thee the Gentiles for Thy inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for Thy possession" (Ps. ii. 8). The circumcision was Our Lord's covenant with mankind as well. He bound Himself to take all the consequences of sin on His own shoulders, and all that was burdensome in the yoke of the law; and He undertook to do whatever was required for our salvation. See how badly you have fulfilled your part in the contract with Him, and resolve to observe it most scrupulously in the future.

28.—THE EPIPHANY.

I. The Epiphany was the first formal manifestation of Our Lord on His entrance into the world, and is a type of all His other manifestations. The coming of Christ was lowly, secret and sudden; it was not in the form that men expected or desired; it was both a surprise and a disappointment. There was much that might be alleged against its genuineness, and abundant excuses for those who wished to disbelieve, or doubt, or procrastinate and wait upon events. At the same time, there was clear evidence of divine action, sufficient for all, and convincing to men of good-will. This evidence differed in each case, and was adapted to the differences of men's circumstances. The simple shepherds had been called directly by God through the angels. Those learned in the study of the stars were brought by the evidence that their own science supplied. The Jews had the Sacred Books and prophecies, and the power of interpreting them; but they did not know the time of their visitation. Further evidence was given to them by the coming of the Magi, and their inquiries of Herod and the priests; this called attention both to the place and to the time of the coming of the Messias. The manifestation of Christ comes to you in some peculiar form adapted to your circumstances. It is a distant glimmering light at first, easily extinguished, often hard to detect. You need to be watchful, sincere, and prompt, if you wish to arrive at its fulness.

II. Consider the different results of the same grace according to the dispositions of men. 1. Herod was badly disposed under the cloak of religiousness. He wanted no Messias: he aspired to be considered the Messias himself. The announcement of the Christ brought forth all the craft and cruelty of his heart; and he sought to destroy the Redeemer who had come to give him life. 2. The priests

and scribes and the people of God generally recognized the truth well enough when it was forced upon their notice; but they were worldly, corrupt, self-sufficient, and they did not find it in themselves to go out and greet their Messias. So they lost the high place which was destined for them under the new covenant. 3. The Gentile Emirs from the desert rose up at once to seek their Lord, and they were rewarded by finding Him. So it is always. Some who are richest in spiritual advantages and nearest to Christ neglect Him and persecute Him. They know His doctrine and law, and have abundant means of grace, but have destroyed the power of profiting by them. The heathen, on the other hand, receive the word gladly and serve God faithfully. Take care it be not said to you "the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you; and shall be given to a nation yielding the fruits thereof" (Matt. xxi. 43).

III. Consider the virtues of the Magi. They had a most ardent desire to find the Messias; they had the generosity to leave all things to follow the star, the courage to overcome difficulties and encounter dangers. They were content with the slightest indications, and persevered in following them up; when the star failed them, their faith remained unshaken, and they sought for other guidance in Jerusalem. God therefore watched over them, showed them the star again after He had tried them, and brought them to the presence of their Redeemer. They adored Him then with intensest fervour and joy. They offered Him the best of their possessions, gifts symbolic both of Christ's dignity and office, and of their own sentiments. Gold represents the red blood of martyrdom; incense, the sweet savour of an innocent life; myrrh, the bitter herb of penance that checks the deadly corruption of sin. Regulate your dispositions towards truth and virtue by those of the three kings. Consider which gift you are able to present to Jesus; endeavour in some way or other to offer Him all the three.

29.—THE CHILDHOOD OF CHRIST.

I. The first thing to be remarked is that Our Redeemer became the object of most violent persecution as soon as He commenced His work of blessing and elevating the human race. This was brought about by Satan, the prince of evil, through men, who have always been too susceptible to his influence. "The dragon stood before the woman, who was ready to be delivered, that when she should be delivered he might devour her Son" (Apoc. xii. 4). The powers of wickedness had always sought to destroy the tree of Jesse so as to prevent the accomplishment of Redemption. Pharaoh wished to exterminate the whole people of the Jews. Aman arranged for a simultaneous and complete massacre. Antiochus the same, in the time of the Maccabees. Athalia destroyed all but one of the direct line of David. Now Herod was inspired by hell to compass the death of the Christ in the general massacre of the innocents. God did not obstruct the freedom of human action; He did not meet it with the methods of the world, with armed resistance, nor did He work a miracle. The Infant was carried into exile, as if too weak to meet the storm, and the efforts of Satan were effectually frustrated. So always; the Church of Jesus is waylaid by the dragon; its destruction seems imminent; it has no material strength for resistance; but God is with it, and it can never fall. Let nothing induce you to lose confidence in the arm of the Almighty and the success of His Church.

II. The next event is the three days' loss and the finding of the Child Jesus in the temple. The character and the career of a man are generally foreshadowed in the life of the child. It was in harmony with Our Lord's complete assumption of human nature that the same should occur in His case. It was only natural that He should exhibit thus early the absorbing passion of His life, as we may call it. He slipped away, child-like, from the custody of His beloved

Mother and betook Himself to His Father's house. There He spent His time in prayer and discoursing with the doctors learned in the law. The subject must have been the accomplishment of the prophecies and the coming of the Messias; for this was uppermost then in the minds of all the Jews. Without disclosing His identity, the Divine Child enlightened their minds, and prepared them for the events which were soon to occur. Have you the same ardour for the spiritual work that God has committed to you? In what direction do your thoughts spontaneously run? Take care always to be about your Father's business. Love the place where He dwelleth.

III. Thenceforth for eighteen years Our Lord lived in subjection and obscurity at Nazareth. Such was God's will; and in this too He was about His Father's business. The lowliness of domestic life might seem unworthy of the Divine Person of Christ and His high vocation. It was not foreshadowed by any of those heroic figures who were types of the Messias. Yet it was required for the completeness of Our Lord's life as our model. The greater portion of life, in the majority of cases, is passed in the domestic state. That state is the most important of all. It determines the character of each man and of the corporate community. It is the great school of virtue, and has a deeper influence on national life than all other education, than science, wealth, and legislation. It is the unit of human society; and such as family life is, such will be the life and the morals of the nation. A race of Christian mothers is more than the most ancient line of kings; a Christian home is more than the best of political constitutions. Yet the family state is so lowly that none other but the Son of God was great enough to give dignity to it. The eighteen years were not too long to devote to the sanctification of the family. Learn hence that the greatest results are prepared during times of obscurity, and prayer, and humble virtues. The foundations of an edifice are hidden from the sight of all, but they are of the first importance.

30.—THE OCCUPATIONS OF CHRIST.

I. Our Lord lived about thirty-three years on earth. During thirty years of this short time He remained in retirement with His Blessed Mother and His foster-father, St. Joseph, in a quiet village, working at a handicraft. During three brief years He preached and wrought miracles in the limited country of Palestine; He laid the foundations of His Church, He trained His Apostles and prepared them for their future work. Within three days He accomplished the great series of mysteries for which He had principally come to this world, His last Supper, His Prayer, His Passion, Death, and Resurrection. After that He remained in a semi-glorified state long enough to give evidence of His Resurrection, and then departed from this earth. But these were full years. "Being made perfect in a short space, He fulfilled a long time" (Wisd. iv. 13). Not a moment was useless or wasted. Our Lord came into full possession of His powers of mind and soul at the first instant of His existence, and never for a moment ceased from offering Himself to the Heavenly Father, praying efficaciously for our necessities, and forming internal acts of every kind of virtue. Those were years of the highest human activity elevated to a divine activity. They were the most precious and wonderful years in the whole history of the world. They did more for the progress of the world and the happiness of mankind than all the efforts, the thoughts, the inventions of the human race during its whole career. Compare your years "few and evil" with Our Lord's. Most of your time is spent in unconsciousness, much in idleness and unprofitableness, much in doing harm to men and offending God. Endeavour henceforth to "redeem the time because the days are evil" (Eph. v. 16).

II. Consider one day of Our Lord's active life. His first duty was towards His Father in heaven, according to the Scripture: "We ought to anticipate the sun in blessing

Thee, and adore Thee at the dawning of the light" (Wisd. xvi. 28). So He says by the Psalmist, "O God, my God! To Thee do I watch at break of day . . . so in the sanctuary have I come before Thee, to see Thy power and Thy glory" (Ps. lxii. 1, 3). We read accordingly in the Gospel: "Early in the morning He came again into the temple" (John viii. 2). After prayer came labour; and this was entirely for the alleviation of human miseries. There was no seeking for recreation, pleasure, or gain; He proclaimed the glory of God, the truths of religion, a perfect morality and spirituality; He comforted the miserable and relieved them by miracles from their bodily infirmities. He was continually in conflict with the hatred, and opposition, and misrepresentations of the Scribes and Pharisees. As to His meals, we read of ears of corn gathered by the way, of bread eaten by the side of the well, of fish cooked on the sea-beach. If He accepted invitations to banquets, it was in order that He might associate with sinners and convert them. Imitate Him by sanctifying every moment of your day, by working directly for God, or at least offering all your acts to Him.

III. The night is the time for repose from labour; but Our Lord gave the example, followed by many of His servants, of making it a time of prayer and spiritual work. "I rose at midnight to give praise to Thee" (Ps. cxviii. 62). We read of His spending the night alone among the mountains in prayer. He discoursed by night to any who, like Nicodemus, were afraid to approach Him by day (John iii. 2). If He yielded to the necessities of His human nature and slept at times, still His soul was active, glorifying His Father as much as by actual prayer. Like the spouse in the Canticles He could say: "I sleep and my heart watcheth" (Cant. v. 2). You, in like manner, can serve God at times of repose and recreation. Do these things as necessities imposed on you by God and not as personal gratifications; regard them as duties, and as the means giving you strength for further work for God and men.

31.—CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRIST'S LIFE.

I. "His name shall be called wonderful" (Isa. ix. 6). The life of Our Lord is most admirable in itself. Amongst all the marvels of the universe and of the human mind and character, there is nothing so rich in matter for admiration as Jesus Our Lord. His life is a source of unfailing interest to men in every age. Unbelievers acknowledge it to be more noble and beautiful than any life imagined or lived. It is a store-house of spiritual and temporal wisdom, it affords us the safest guidance for our lives; and if its lessons were practised, most of the evils of humanity would be cured. Our Lord's being is wonderful as consisting of two natures infinitely distant, united in one person. In every particular we can trace this double influence. Our Lord was created, temporal, born of an earthly mother, yet, as God, He was eternal and without a mother. He was made "a worm and no man" (Ps. xxi. 17), and yet He is recognized by all as "beautiful above the sons of men" (Ps. xliv. 3). He was crushed beneath the burden of our sins, and He destroyed the power of sin. He was condemned by representatives of all mankind, and He is the supreme Judge of the living and the dead. None has been so lowly, and none is so great. He commands our awe and adoration, yet He is the perfection of tenderness and the object of the most ardent love. Consider Our Lord as an object of wonder. What treasures He contains, by many men unknown or despised! Let Him be the chief object of your thoughts, desires and love.

II. Utility is a very important measure of things. Judged by this, the life of Christ is supremely profitable; it has a practical purpose, it is adapted thereto, it is capable of accomplishing it fully. Our Lord has benefited the angels by meriting their glory and happiness for them, by filling with human occupants the many gaps in their ranks by

finally crushing the head of their enemy, Satan. The utility which mostly impresses us is that which accrues to ourselves. First comes that which is supernatural; the communication of revealed truth, of grace, of pardon for sins. We have received certain assurance of things which are of the greatest importance to us, the means of leading good lives, strength against temptation and the sorrows of life, and eternal happiness to come. In the natural order we have in Our Lord the model of the perfect citizen, we have the commencement of order, progress, liberty, and our present civilization, and the only system which will secure the rights and happiness of all. Every single word and action of His life contains something which is for the worldly and heavenly utility of mankind. Consider in particular the benefits you have received; be thankful for them; and hold fast to Him from whom alone you receive all good things.

III. The life of Jesus Christ was, above all, most honourable and glorious to the heavenly Father. This is the first and final purpose of all creation, and surpasses all other subsidiary objects. Our Lord sought this chiefly, and this He accomplished perfectly, for it is not an object that depends in any measure on human concurrence, or that can be frustrated by us. Our salvation He sought, not for its own sake, but with reference to His Father's glory. He says: "I seek not My own glory . . . I honour My Father" (John viii. 49, 50). Jesus Christ rendered to God the full and infinite homage which is His due; and this not from Himself only, but from all creatures, of whom He is the head and the summary. So He repaired all the injury which sin had done, and counterbalanced it by the infinitely greater weight of His merits. So He made a glorious success out of that which seemed destined to irreparable ruin. Jesus also established His Father's secondary glory with us by revealing Him to us and leading us to serve Him, and drawing us from our sins. Rejoice at this double glory rendered to God, and strive to glorify Him yourself in both ways.

32.—THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST.

I. The advent of Christ had been announced by a long series of patriarchs, kings and prophets. St. John the Baptist was the last of the line, a rugged austere figure suddenly appearing from the desert, where he had lived in mortification and hardship for thirty years, in intimate communion with God. He was the immediate herald of the Messias and the greatest of the prophets. Every one of them had represented the Redemption by some symbolic act. Noah had saved the elect in the ark. Jacob begot twelve sons as princes of the people of God. Moses had delivered the Israelites from the avenging angel, and brought them through the waters of the Red Sea to the bounds of the Promised Land. David established his throne in Jerusalem. Solomon, the prince of peace, built the temple. Elias figured the Ascension. To St. John was given the emblem of baptism. This was merely a baptism of penance, and was not for the remission of sins; it was of water only, and not of the Holy Ghost and fire like Our Lord's. It stirred men to a sense of their sins and of their need for a Redeemer, and revived their expectation and desire of the Messias. You in like manner have to prepare for the coming of Jesus in His Holy Sacrament and in death. Do not venture rashly and unprepared into His presence, but cultivate retirement and prayer, penance and desire, in imitation either of St. John or his hearers.

II. The Baptist proclaimed that the kingdom of heaven, the revelation of the Messias, was at hand; and all Israel went out to him on the banks of the Jordan to prepare themselves for the event. And how did the Christ appear? Not descending from heaven in visible glory, not at the head of a conquering army, not even surrounded by Apostles and saints, not "with observation" of any kind. He left Nazareth with others of His fellow-townsmen, and journeyed humbly on foot with them over hill and dale. He listened

to the words of St. John, one among the crowd, a poor artisan who had lately left His work like the others. All men were looking for the great Messias, and He stood in the midst of them, and they knew Him not. Then He approaches humbly to be baptized, as if in penance for former sins. Thus again on commencing His active mission, as in the Circumcision and the Presentation, Our Lord ranks Himself openly among sinners and shares their punishment. He loves us so much that He delights in everything that makes Him like to us, even the appearance of our degradation. Except for actual guilt, which was impossible, He makes Himself the Representative Sinner, as it were, of mankind. What could He do more to relieve you of the embarrassment of your conscious guilt and teach you the fullest confidence in His pity and love?

III. "He who humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Matt. xxiii. 12). According to this law of the spiritual life, the self-humiliation of Our Lord merited His manifestation at the hands of His Father. He did not declare Himself, but the Spirit made Him known to St. John. Then the great prophet, to whose commanding personality all men bowed down, confessed his own unworthiness before the obscure villager of Nazareth, and desired at once to surrender his office. But he obeyed his Master and baptized Him. Then the heavens were opened, the Holy Ghost descended in the form of a dove, and a voice testified that Jesus was the Messias, the beloved Son of God. Consider: 1. That the humility of St. John, even more than his austere life and gift of prophecy, witnesses to his greatness and sanctity. With the Jewish priests, the very gifts of God were the occasion of their ruin; pride in their high position made them reject their Saviour, who, they thought, would supplant them in it. 2. That Christ's humility led to His exaltation by God more effectually than if He had declared Himself. Be sure that God's credentials are much better than any that you may provide yourself with.

33.—JESUS IN THE DESERT.

I. Immediately after His baptism "Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert" (Matt. iv. 1). 1 Our Lord was subject to all the conditions of human life; and it was in accordance with law that He should prepare Himself by retirement and mortification for a great supernatural career, and for the temptation that is associated with it. The messenger of God must go straight from the Divine Presence to his task. 2. The lawgiver of the Old Testament, just before delivering the law and organizing Israel into a nation, retired alone to the recesses of the mountains, and spent forty days face to face with God. With the same solemnity the Lawgiver of the New Testament prepared Himself to proclaim the universal Kingdom of God. 3. The first epoch of human history had commenced with a personal struggle between the father of the race and the spirit of evil; a like struggle had to take place at the opening of the second epoch. Satan again girded himself to overthrow the divine plan, and hoped to succeed against the second Adam as against the first. You also have a work to do which requires all your vigilance and energy. Critical moments will occur in your life when you have to choose between God and Satan, and the nature of the issues is obscure. You cannot develop the necessary capacity on a sudden. It must be the fruit of a previous preparation like that of Our Lord.

II. Fasting, as an act of religion and of penance, was enjoined on the followers of the Gospel by Our Lord's example, as it had been established by the Law and the Prophets in the persons of Moses and Elias. It is an essential portion of the spiritual life, and, for our guidance, has been made one of the formal institutions of the Church. Our Lord observed it, and thereby He bound the Old and the New Covenants into one. His forty days' fast was according to the will of His Father, and it corresponded to

the command of abstinence from the forbidden fruit, imposed as the test of our first parents. Christ's observance counterbalanced the disobedience of Adam. The first sin in Eden prepared the way for further acts of pride, rebellion, doubt, disbelief, and then for complete demoralization and ruin; the first victory over temptation opened the way to further victories and the final rout of the tempter. Learn hence the necessity of acquiring the habit of self-restraint betimes. It is the fundamental element of all resistance to temptation and of all virtue. Practised with this object, the abstinence prescribed by the Church becomes an instrument of moral training, a preparation for all temptations and an atonement for sin. Cultivate the spirit of the law while observing its letter.

III. Having thus prepared as if He were no more than man, Our Lord submitted to the humiliation of being tempted by the arch-enemy. The temptations were three, corresponding to the triple concupiscence, and to the different forms of sin committed by Adam and Eve. Satan proposed first indulgence in forbidden food; then two acts, one of which involved pride and the manifestation of Our Lord in a mode not ordered by God; and the other, ambition for worldly power and possessions, and finally the direct service of Satan instead of God. Summarily, it amounted to proposing natural instead of supernatural methods of action. Our Lord endured this, though it was most repugnant to His sanctity, and by enduring He overcame. His victory is ours. By this He reversed the inherited habit of yielding to sin derived from our first parent according to nature, He broke the series of Satan's victories, and communicates to us, if we care to have it, something of His own facility in resisting temptation. Learn hence that no one is exempt from being tempted, that sin has always a plausible appearance of according with reason and nature, and that when we sacrifice nature for the supernatural, God's angels will minister to us, even as to our natural requirements.

34.—COMPANIONS OF CHRIST'S LIFE.

I. "Being rich He became poor for your sakes, that through His poverty you might be rich" (2 Cor. viii. 9). The first companion of Our Lord's life, and aid in His mission was *Poverty*. In this there were three degrees of privation. 1. Our Lord gave up all the wealth and possessions of this world. He was born in a stable of the spouse of a poor artisan. He lived first by daily labour, and lastly by the offerings of the charitable. He died despoiled even of His garments, and was laid in another's sepulchre. 2. He had no friendship or even acquaintance with great men, with the rich and noble, with chief-priests. His companions were poor ignorant fishermen. During His ministry He deprived Himself of the companionship of His Mother, the only being who understood Him and was in full sympathy with Him. 3. He resigned the use of His divine power and authority for His own purposes, and employed it solely for the benefit of others. In the methods of the world, money, influential friends, exhibition of power are essential to success; to despise them is madness. In Christ's kingdom they are hindrances; this is the great comfort of the bulk of mankind. Christ's poverty is the cause of our spiritual wealth. This is true also in the economical order. In poor countries all have a sufficiency of work and wealth; but the thirst for riches and the accumulation of wealth is the cause of the abject misery of the millions of poor. Imitate, according to your state, the poverty of Christ; at least be detached from your possessions and generous with them.

II. Our Lord's second companion and aid was *Humility*. Pride and self-assertion were one chief element in the sin of the angels and the sin of Adam; they would not submit to God's supreme authority. The world associates pride with greatness; it values all advantages principally as ministering to pride. This is one of the three concupiscences which Our Lord desired to destroy; it is the fertile source of a

large progeny of sins, and of personal, and social, and international troubles. Our Lord gave us an example, therefore, of lowering Himself below His proper level, ignoring His own greatness, concealing His admirable perfections, foregoing all esteem and honour, courting contempt and calumny, and suffering the loss of reputation and good name. He had qualities which would have raised Him legitimately to an unexampled position in the world. But He concealed His wisdom by addressing Himself in lowly language to the humble and afflicted, and by keeping silence before His judges. He concealed His sanctity by consorting with sinners and making Himself one of them externally. He concealed His power by commanding silence as to His miracles and His Transfiguration. Learn of Him to be meek and humble of heart; avoid the esteem of men, and still more your own self-esteem and seek only to be exalted before God by sanctity.

III. The third companion of Jesus was *Suffering* and sorrow. He gave up infinite beatitude to become "a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity" (Isa. liii. 3). Sorrow is the lot of all men. "Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that worketh evil" (Rom. ii. 9). The world endeavours to escape from this law by the concupiscence of the flesh, luxury, the unbridled pursuit of pleasure and comfort. Hence springs up another crop of evils. But Christ says, "My sorrow is always before Me" (Ps. xxxvii. 18). He drained to the dregs the full cup of human suffering. He had always before Him the sight of the sins and miseries of mankind, and of the eternal loss of so many souls that He loved more than His own life. His own terrible Passion too was ever before His eyes, and worse still, the consciousness that for many it would be in vain. These sorrows were a perpetual atonement for our sensuality, and the supplement to our imperfect sorrow for our sins. These sorrows have purchased happiness for you. Forego pleasures for the sake of Christ, and endeavour with Him to increase the happiness of others.

35.—PIOUS CUSTOMS OF CHRIST.

I. Consider the *thoughts* of Our Lord. One of the uses of the material world, as we learn from Wisd. xiii. and Rom. i., is to instruct us about God and raise our thoughts to Him. Our Lord shows us how to read spiritual lessons in every natural event, and to use every object as an occasion for glorifying God. The seed-time and the harvest, the sparrows and the lilies, the weeds amongst the corn, a debtor imprisoned, the grafting of vines, the catching of fish, the tending of sheep—all these things He shows in a spiritual aspect. He makes them all exemplify God's dealings and convey lessons of holiness. So we should learn to regard all things in life with the spiritual eye, and by the supernatural light of God's countenance. The knowledge and culture of this age and its wonderful scientific discoveries are not merely for our material progress, but for that which is spiritual. Each subject is a new revelation of divine power and wisdom; each is a corroboration of our faith, a new claim on our service, a new reason for adoring and loving God. Always look below the material surface of things and seek there the action of God. In the many problems of life you will find that religion furnishes the only clue to their comprehension, and that the law of God is the only practical system of action, and the only remedy for the else incurable evils of the world.

II. Consider the *words* of Jesus Christ. They are recorded in considerable abundance in the Gospels. We are there admitted to hear His public discourses to the multitudes, His instructions to the Apostles, and conversations on private occasions, as for instance at the repasts given by the chief of the Pharisees, by Zacheus the publican, at the well of Samaria, with Nicodemus, and in the house of Lazarus. On such occasions of lesser solemnity or of relaxation, we find Our Lord always the same; He has ever

the one object at heart, *viz.*, the glory of His Father and the spiritual benefit of men. His words are always the words of the Son of God. There is nothing in them of worldliness, of unkindness, of smartness, of levity. He exhorted and reproved, and led His hearers towards God. He used the occasion of repasts to establish the faith of His disciples, to pardon sin, to institute the Blessed Sacrament. Study carefully the words of Christ, endeavour to discover the divine wisdom which lies hidden in them, and make them the mottoes of your life. Model your conversation on His. Your words may be prolific of much evil or much good; for every one of them you will be called to account; and as Our Lord Himself says, "by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. xii. 37).

III. Consider Our Lord's *actions*. He performed them with the highest perfection, doing always the thing which was best and holiest, doing it with the single motive of accomplishing the will of God, acting with fervour and love, and without any smallest taint of self-seeking or unkindness. 1. The sight of God, which Christ always enjoyed, involved the direction of all His actions towards God, and the impossibility of any imperfection. Therefore keep the presence of God always before your eyes, and you will be able to do all things for Him and avoid sin. 2. The personal union of the Word with the Sacred Humanity made every action of Christ's a divine action, and therefore infinitely perfect. Keep yourself in union with God by preserving the state of grace, and by a frequent reception of Holy Communion. So every action you do in the natural order will become an act of supernatural virtue. 3. Our Lord sought always to do His Father's will and not His own. So consider always what God would wish you to do, and conform your desires and will to His. Thus you will merit to have it said of you as of Christ, "He hath done all things well" (John vi. 38).

36.—THE PREACHING OF CHRIST.

I. Truth, and especially religious truth, is one of God's greatest gifts to men. It is the nourishment of the intelligence, our highest faculty. The enlightenment of our minds was one of the chief functions of the Messias. "To preach the gospel to the poor He hath sent Me" (Luke iv. 18). "For this I came into the world, that I should give testimony to the truth" (John xviii. 37). There were three reasons for this. 1. As the uncreated Word of God, Our Lord is the repository of all truth. "In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. ii. 3). 2. Jesus is our chief Pontiff and Pastor, and has charge of us. To such it was said of old: "Son of man, I have made Thee a watchman of the house of Israel: and Thou shalt hear the word out of My mouth, and shalt tell it them from Me" (Ez. iii. 17). 3. His overflowing charity urges Him to communicate to us of His abundance, and make us sharers in His great perfection. The teachings of Our Lord were for all mankind. In the first instance, however, He communicated them to the Jews, according to the divine promise given to Abraham. It was through the medium of that nation that all the world was to be blessed by the communication of divine truth. When the Jews rejected that privilege, a faithful few were selected from them to transfer the great gift to the Gentiles. Take care to value the intellectual benefit of natural and supernatural truth preached to you by Our Lord. You have in Him an infallible Teacher who will not suffer you to go astray in any matter of real importance.

II. Consider the chief substance of the revelation contained in Our Lord's preaching, "the mystery which hath been hidden from ages and generations, but now is made manifest to His saints" (Col. i. 26). Compared with what we possess, only a small portion of divine revelation was known to the Jews. Our Lord has taught us many most important truths about God and man. He developed for us

the great doctrine of divine Unity, and completed it by revealing the Trinity of Persons. In Himself He has manifested the Father to us. He has shown us something of the wonders of the Incarnation, the immensity of His love for sinners in the work of Redemption, the possibility of pardon for our sins, and the method of obtaining it. He has made known that He, who loves us and redeemed us, is appointed to be our Judge. Concerning our life here, Christ has told us whence we come, whither we are going, the origin of evil, the use of suffering, the true nature of the present world, and some of the secrets of the future. He has shown us also the model of perfect life, and the true law of our development. You have in Christ's words all that you require. How blessed you are; and how unfortunate are those who have rejected this saving knowledge, who, like the beasts, know no more than the material world, and who otherwise have no intelligence and no hopes!

III. Recall the immense power of human speech as shown in so many cases. Of Our Lord's preaching even His enemies said: "Never did man speak like this man" (John vii. 46). He spoke with an authority that commanded attention, with reasons that almost compelled assent; His sanctity of life and abundant miracles reinforced His words; and the unction of the Holy Ghost poured forth, gave them their principal efficacy. So is the word of Jesus always powerful in His Church, sufficient to convince the reason and touch the heart, unless men themselves place obstacles to it. Next consider how ineffective Our Lord's preaching was on many minds, and how little result there seemed to be when He died. Such is the power of the human will. Against obstinacy, hardness of heart, deliberate blindness, resistance to truth, preference for evil, moral corruption, the word of Christ becomes powerless; or rather it becomes a word of condemnation, eternally efficient and unchangeable. It depends on yourself whether the word of Christ shall be to you a word of life or a word of death.

37.—THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST.

I. Isaias had foretold the many miracles of the Messias (Isa. xxxv. 4-6); and Our Lord recalled this when the disciples of St. John came to ask who He was (Luke vii. 22). This was the crucial and necessary proof of His divine mission. The words of Our Lord were effectual on believers or those who were ready to believe; the miracles were chiefly "a sign not to believers but to unbelievers" (1 Cor. xiv. 22). So it was that Jesus said to the Jews: "I speak to you and you believe not; the works that I do in the name of My Father, they give testimony of Me . . . though you will not believe me, believe the works" (John x. 25, 38). Miracles were necessarily a distinctive feature of Our Lord's life. Nature, otherwise immutable, was plastic in His hands; for all power was given to Him in heaven and on earth. There were wondrous signs in the heavens at His birth and death. He multiplied the loaves, changed water into wine, calmed the storm, walked on the waves, cured all diseases instantaneously, raised the dead to life. Finally Christ gave the same power to His Church. "Amen, I say to you, he that believeth in Me, the works that I do he shall also do, and greater than these shall he do" (John xiv. 12). Thank Our Lord for this communication of His powers. False systems may copy the Church's rites, and usurp her name, and even show some of her results, but this is an inalienable prerogative which they cannot appropriate and dare not counterfeit.

II. Our Lord's mission required the corroboration of miracles; it needed supernatural proof of its superiority to Judaism. Without miracles the presumption was entirely against Christianity. The ancient system had established possession, it was of divine origin, it was founded with miracles, it had a splendid history illustrated by the holy lives of Moses and the prophets, and by the great deeds of the national heroes. A new system, of obscure origin, unscriptural too (as it seemed), opposed to the formed habits

and high aspirations of the Jews, now claimed their allegiance. It needed an exhibition of the same divine power which had been manifested in Judaism ; miracle was its only decisive proof. The human mind has a natural craving for contact with the supernatural, which is not quenched even by the loss of faith. Such an argument as miracle, transcending the laws of nature, is the clearest evidence of divine authority. It is an argument patent to all men, and especially to the multitudes who have not the time or the faculties for intricate argument. You have this proof of your faith in abundance. Thank Our Lord for giving it to you in His own life and in His Church.

III. The combined evidence of ancient prophecy and the miracles of Jesus, was sufficient to convince every honest and reasonable man, and to outweigh all prejudice and misrepresentation. But more wonderful and more powerful than that evidence was the pride and obstinacy which resisted it. Our Lord told the Jews that they were inexcusable, that the evidence was sufficient, and that the malice of their hearts more than attachment to the old religion was the force that moved them. " Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil " (John iii. 19). They denied Our Lord's miracles as long as they could, they tried to explain away the facts, and in the last resort attributed them to Beelzebub. Then they presumed to dictate to the Almighty the terms of their submission ; they demanded other miracles which were not within the scope of God's decrees, signs in the heaven and the descent of Christ from the cross. These signs were not given to them ; they would have been equally ineffectual ; for as Our Lord said, and as subsequent events proved, " neither will they believe if one rise again from the dead " (Luke xvi. 30). How immense is the malice and hardness of the human heart ! Perhaps you too are resisting the word and the power of God. Be careful that you do not extinguish entirely the light which He gives you.

38.—THE RAISING OF THE DEAD.

I. The most conclusive miracles worked by Our Lord were the three restorations of the dead to life. These were not more difficult to the supreme power of God than the cure of diseases, but they impressed men more, as being less susceptible of natural explanation, and more unusual events. The first was the ruler's daughter (Matt. ix.); she was twelve years of age and was only just dead. The father, with extraordinary faith, besought Our Lord to restore her to life. Jesus, who refused nothing to those who asked, went to the house, ordered the multitudes to be silenced and put out from the chamber, and, in the presence of a few witnesses, took the maiden by the hand and bade her arise. The fame of this miracle spread rapidly over the whole country, and directed the attention of all towards Jesus. This represents the spiritual restoration of those who have been innocent, who have sinned less grievously, who have not remained long in their sins, but have had recourse at once to God. They are restored quickly, and easily, and quietly to the life of grace. If you unfortunately should fall into sin, do not delay to repent while it is yet easy, before the habit of sin has been established, and before you have hardened in the coldness and rigidity of spiritual death. Do not be discouraged, but call at once on Jesus with vivid faith.

II. The second one to be raised from death was the son of the widow of Naim. This was a young man, the only support of his mother. He was farther advanced in years. He had entered on the duties of life, and knew something of its troubles and its sins. Things had gone farther with him than with the ruler's child. He was some little time dead, had been prepared for burial, and was already being carried to the grave. No request for a miracle appears to have been addressed to Our Lord; there is no evidence of such faith in His power as the ruler had shown;

the case was regarded as hopeless. But Our Lord was moved by the mother's tears and desolation. He approached, stayed the procession with a motion of His hand, and raised the young man to life. The effect of this miracle was much greater than that of the previous one. The people proclaimed that a great prophet had risen up, and that God had visited His people (Luke vii.). This represents those who have fallen from innocence and plunged deeply into sin, and who, in the ordinary course, do not retrace their steps. Restoration seems hardly to be expected; but even then God's grace is omnipotent; the sacraments are able to raise them again to the spiritual life and the vigour of holiness. Never despair of yourself or of others.

III. The third case was that of Lazarus (John xi.). He was somewhat advanced in years. He had already been placed in his cave-sepulchre; the body had been watched and visited during three days, decomposition had set in, his death had been decisively verified, and the tomb had been closed. The friends believed in the miraculous powers of Jesus, but had absolutely no faith in the possibility of His raising Lazarus to life. Surrounded by a crowd of relatives and other persons of importance, Our Lord proceeded to the tomb, ordered it to be opened, and then, with tears and prayers, with a loud voice and eyes raised to heaven, He called the dead man from the tomb. The result of this was greater still than in the other cases. The miracle was apparently more difficult, it was better known and more impressive in all its circumstances. Great emotion was excited; many believed in Jesus as the promised Messias; and, on the other hand, the chief priests were so hardened in their infidelity as to plot the death of Jesus and of Lazarus. Lazarus represents the worst class of abandoned sinners, and shows that, even in the extremest cases, the mercy of God will receive such sinners on their repentance. Increase your trust in the immensity of the power and mercy of Jesus your Lord.

39.—THE TRANSFIGURATION.

I. Our Blessed Lord was glorified by His Father and manifested at the beginning of His child-life, again at the beginning of His public life when He was baptized, and a third time at the beginning of the conflict which was to end in His Passion and Death. Each time a special humiliation was illumined by a corresponding glory. In the Transfiguration, Our Lord suspended for a moment the continual miracle which kept His glory concealed. Then He shone like the sun, His garments became brilliant as snow, He was elevated above the earth, and the Father declared Him to be His well-beloved Son. The mysteries of which Our Lord was the centre or source were proclaimed, the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Passion, immortality and glory. Around Jesus were the representatives of the past and the future, of the Law, the Prophets, and the Gospel, Moses and Elias, and the three chief apostles. Such magnificence had never been seen on earth, nor will be till the last revelation of Christ as Judge. The Apostles were overwhelmed, they lost all sense of the world below, they knew not what they said for ecstasy. Thenceforth they had a new awe and veneration for their Lord. You have the light of the revelation of faith. This is enough to show you the divine splendour hidden under the lowly forms which Our Lord now assumes. When you enter His presence, forget the world and self, and lose yourself in Him.

II. Who were the witnesses of this glorious mystery? Moses and Elias, the two grandest figures of the Old Testament, mighty men endowed with strength and graces, who left an abiding mark in history. Each of them had fasted forty days like Our Lord. Each had taught the truth, had suffered greatly; each had wrought the deliverance of the

people, one from the bondage of Egypt, the other from the more noxious and degrading servitude to a false religion. Each of them, while on earth, had been called up into the mountains to see the manifestation of God; and now again they are called from the world of spirits to see the manifestation of God's Only Son, and to carry back the revelation to the souls of the just who were waiting in darkness for tidings of the Redemption. There also was Peter, the chief teacher and the rock of the faith; James, the first Apostle to gain the crown of martyrdom; John, the disciple of love and purity. These represent the triumph of Christ over the falsehood, the violence, and the lusts of the world. Imitate these holy men in their virtues, in their conflicts, in their desire and love for Christ, and you will receive the revelation of His glory with them, now by faith, hereafter by actual vision.

III. Consider the circumstances. This manifestation of glory took place during Our Lord's prayer, in solitude and silence, on the mountain top, far removed from the turmoil of the world's pleasure and business. Those who saw it were few, selected out of the elected few; much of it escaped their notice while they slept, and they were not allowed to reveal the secret till after Our Lord's Resurrection. The other Apostles, probably, were as yet unapt for the perception of so much glory: and still more so were those learned, critical, self-sufficient Jews, who proposed to Our Lord the sign which they would consider to be sufficient evidence of His divine authority. The discourse of Christ was about His Passion and death; and the three Apostles were prepared thereby for the scene that they alone were to witness in the garden of Gethsemani. Hence learn, 1, that prayer is the gate which admits you to the presence of Jesus and the sight of His glory; 2, that this glory is shown only to those few who have made themselves worthy by high virtues; 3, that suffering is closely connected with glory, and is itself a glory when endured for Christ.

40.—THE LAST SUPPER.

I. In the Last Supper Jesus Christ exhibits His love, and proves Himself to be our best *Friend*. The account of it begins: "having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end" (John xiii. 1). This was the farewell banquet on the last evening of His earthly life; in it He delivered His Testament, His final word of love, and bequeathed us a keepsake and eternal memorial of Himself. This bequest was not His portrait, not even the most valuable of His created works, not an empty type or figure of Himself; it was Himself under the form of a simple creature, it was His own Body and Blood, it was the food of eternal life for our souls under the appearance of perishable bodily nourishment. This gift was not bestowed in its reality on the twelve alone, and as a mere historical remembrance for succeeding generations, but it was to be a personal gift for every human being to the end of time; it was to be the means of incorporating Christ, not merely with the human species in general, but with each individual soul. In this Supper Our Lord gives expression in act to that which He declared of old: "My delights are to be with the children of men" (Prov. viii. 31); and He literally fulfils that other promise: "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20). This gift is the supreme expression of Christ's love for you: the devout reception of it is the supreme expression of your love for Him. You receive in it the full effects of His love, and you are able to make Him a full and adequate return.

II. On this occasion Our Lord further exhibits the most profound humility, and makes Himself our *Servant;* according to His word: "the Lord . . will gird Himself, and make" His servants "sit down to meat, and passing will minister unto them" (Luke xii. 37). In this He places us above Himself: "Which is greater, he that sitteth at table, or he that serveth? . . . But I am in the midst of you as he that serveth" (Luke xxii. 27). Our Lord

showed His humble servitude by kneeling before His Apostles and washing their feet. By this He cleansed them from the remnants of their sins, and represented the much more lowly servitude by which He cleanses mankind from the intolerable loathsomeness of their iniquity. Thank Our Lord for this exceeding humiliation. He points out its lesson to you: "I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also" (John xiii. 14). "You also ought to wash one another's feet" (*ib.*), by humble service towards them. How have you done this in the past; how will you carry it out in the future? By doing so to men you repay the debt that you owe to Christ.

III. The Last Supper was also the inauguration of the Eternal Sacrifice, and in it Jesus exhibits Himself as our *High Priest.* In the giving of His Body and Blood, He connects it significantly with the sacrifice that He was to offer on the cross the following day. "This is My body that shall be delivered, My blood which shall be shed." The action in the supper-room was an anticipation of the action on Calvary. That mystical banquet was not only a memorial of Our Lord to us, it is also an act of worship on the part of men towards God. We receive in it a gift from heaven, we render back a sacrifice to Our Maker. Further, Our Lord conveyed the participation in His priestly office to the Apostles and their successors, saying: "Do this for a commemoration of Me" (Luke xxii. 19). By this instrumentality the Sacrifice of Calvary was made an eternal sacrifice, to be offered unceasingly among the Gentiles from the rising of the sun to its setting (Mal. i. 11). The Pasch of that evening was the Pasch of all time, and all mankind are called to partake of it with Jesus and His Apostles. This was the compendium of all God's bounties: "He hath made a remembrance of His wonderful works; He hath given food to them that fear Him" (Ps. cx. 4, 5). Venerate this mystery of mysteries. In it you really partake in that solemn supper and in the sacrifice that Jesus offered on Calvary.

41.—THE EXCESS OF THE PASSION.

I. From one point of view it might seem unnecessary for Our Lord to go to the extreme of suffering so much and dying; for His smallest action was of infinite merit, so that it exceeded all the demerits of the world, and could have purchased life for all. Yet there is a beautiful appropriateness and fitness in the excesses of the Passion. The death of Christ is in accordance with that fundamental law, typified in all the ceremonies of the Old Testament, that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. ix. 22). Throughout nature we may trace the principle that death produces life. The spring is preceded by winter. "That which thou sowest is not quickened unless it die first" (1 Cor. xv. 36). Of old this was represented by the fable of the phœnix. After a hundred years of life it built itself a funeral pyre, and out of its ashes a new phœnix arose. Life, then, must be preceded by an adequate death. Death is a vivifying action, a creative action, we may say, and is itself the cure of death. The supernatural life of man, being a participation in the Infinite, must proceed from an infinite death. Our death in sin is irremediable, as far as we are concerned, and in a manner infinite. It requires to be remedied by a death which is productive of God in us. Therefore God died in His human nature. See then the great efficiency of the death of Jesus; and estimate rightly the greatness of the evil that sin inflicts, and the greatness of the boon bestowed on you.

II. The excess of Our Lord's Passion is in full accordance with universal law. God destroys nothing; not even the energies of evil. He allows all things to work out their activities to the full; He lets the battle rage till evil exhausts itself, and is broken like a wave on an iron-bound coast. Sin, therefore, being, in its tendency, destructive of God, is allowed

to go to its last extremity in destroying the life of God in human nature. Not till then had it done its worst; and after that, it can do no further harm except what we deliberately invite upon ourselves. Our Lord rose again unharmed by it, and in that consists His victory. His triumph is thus far greater than if He had prevented sin, or stifled its energies by an extra-legal intervention of new forces in the universe. In His Passion Our Lord bore the whole brunt of all the sins of the world, and not merely those of His actual enemies. The hatred and fury of Caiphas, Pilate and Herod, were the embodiment of our malice. But, further, in Gethsemani He actually saw and endured the full horror of each individual sin that we have committed. How fearful would have been the consequences of your sins to you if they had not been exhausted on Our Lord! "If in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke xxiii. 31).

III. The excess of the Passion teaches us important lessons. 1. It is an instance of the extraordinary prodigality of bounty which appears in all God's works. Let this move you always to do the most you can, and not the least that you are obliged. Be generous towards God and your neighbour. 2. It lays down the important rule of self-sacrifice, as the grandest source of good in this world, and the only force that can counteract the terrible effects of selfishness. "Contempt of death is the source of all moral force." "Those who are ready to die will always master those who prefer to live" (Lacordaire). 3. Considering the enormous destructiveness of sin, and the share of our burden which Jesus assumed, we should be content to endure such minor consequences of it as come upon us. 4. Judge of the horrible power which sin will exert in hell on those who are so foolish as to refuse the benefits of Redemption. 5. Reflect on the greatness of the love of Jesus for you, in that He endured such excesses for your sake, without compulsion, and with nothing to gain. In return give yourself to Him without reserve.

42.—CHRIST'S DEATH FOR ALL MEN.

I. "He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world" (1 John ii. 2). The magnificent superabundance of Our Lord's Redemption is shown in this, that He did not die for the elect only, but also for the reprobate; He suffered the penalties not only of the sins that we shall repent of, but of those which will remain unforgiven through our perverse obstinacy. No sinner, however atrocious, is excluded from Christ's love and the benefit of His death. He desires the salvation of all, and provides them with the means of obtaining forgiveness and eternal life. "He will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. ii. 4). Some labour under particularly adverse conditions, but there is more abundant grace and more generous allowance for them. However great the disadvantages of a man's surroundings, however handicapped he may be by the prejudices of a bad education and an heredity of evil, he has, somehow, compensation for all this, and the means of saving his soul. So much has been done for us, that nothing remains undone which might have been done. We are saved almost in spite of ourselves. Nothing can outweigh Our Lord's propitiation except a man's own full and deliberate rejection of it. Only by persevering ill-will on our part can we fail of salvation. What immense confidence in Our Lord you ought to have for yourself and others!

II. Notwithstanding the infinite efficiency of the death of Christ, and its application to all, it is ineffective in many cases. St. John explains this; the light shined in the darkness, but the darkness would not comprehend it (John i. 5). God sent His Son for the illumination of all men, yet "men loved darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil" (John iii. 19). The sun pours forth light and warmth upon all the earth, yet it is possible for men to conceal

themselves from its rays, and make it to themselves as if it did not exist. There are three stages of grace prepared for us by the passion of Christ. There is a first grace moving men to abandon sin and turn towards truth and holiness. All receive this; it makes salvation possible for all. Next there is sanctifying grace, the state of possessing God and loving Him. Not all are willing to go so far as this; and of those who do, some fail and return to sin and final loss. The third stage is of those who persevere to the end and attain to glory. Thus it is that many who are called are not finally chosen. They reject grace and pervert Redemption itself to their ruin. You cannot trust yourself. Whatever you are or have, there is in you a root of perversity, which may bring you to destruction if you fail in humility or prayer.

III. There are many now who will not take the trouble to secure for themselves their share in the Atonement of Christ. They think it a bad bargain to sacrifice the advantages of the present for those which, though eternal, are not at present visible to them. Many prefer to follow the animal impulses of the lower nature rather than the calls of the supernatural. They say that the law of Christ is too difficult for human nature, or is actually opposed to it, that grace and the evidence of truth are insufficient, that God expects to reap where He has not sown. But sooner or later, the sufficiency of grace, light, and strength, is placed within their reach; and the power of Christ's merit makes all things possible to them. A day will come when the groundlessness of all excuses will be proved. Then sinners will recognize their folly and hate themselves for it. In the multitudes of the elect brought out of the great tribulation, they will see how easily salvation might have been attained, how it was actually within their grasp, and how completely their destruction is their own fault. Be wise in time. Take account of the future as well as of the present. Know that Jesus will never fail you if you be true to yourself and Him.

43.—CHRIST ON THE CROSS.

I. Consider the motives and thoughts of Our Lord. Always most perfect, they were especially so in His Crucifixion, the crowning act of His earthly life. 1. Towards the Eternal Father He had a burning love, and He desired to render to Him an infinite sacrifice of praise and service, not only from Himself, but from the human race and all creation. He wished also to make atonement to Him for the wrongs inflicted by men, and to restore that glory of which He had been robbed. 2. Jesus was moved by an ardent love for men and pity for their miseries. As God, in union with the Father and the Holy Ghost, He had created men; as Man, He was one of them. Mankind were thus doubly His; and He wished to make them still more His, by redeeming them to Himself, and gaining their love in return. 3. Our Lord suffered a most bitter anguish at the sight of the sins of the world, of which He was bearing all the responsibility and the burden; but most bitter of all was the thought of human ingratitude, of the unprofitableness to so many of all that He was enduring, of their wicked folly in rejecting Him, and of their eternal obstinacy in the midst of most fearful misery. Strive to enter into Our Lord's sentiments, and to carry out His objects and intentions towards His Father and Himself, towards yourself and your brethren.

II. Consider the words of Christ on the Cross. His dying words merit the most careful consideration, for they show us the action of His soul at that supreme moment, and the details to which we ought to direct our attention. He first thinks of the furious, blaspheming, blood-thirsty crowd who had brought Him to the Cross, and He prays that God will take account of their ignorance and pardon them. Then He turns to the most miserable of all there present, one of the malefactors suffering with Him, accords him pardon and grace, and declares him to be one of the

elect in the eternal kingdom. Only after the wicked does Our Lord think of His own best beloved, the holiest of all creatures, His Blessed Mother; He bequeaths her to His chosen Apostle, and through him to humanity. Next He fulfils the Scripture by giving evidence of His desolation of spirit, and of the pangs of thirst which otherwise would have escaped our notice and sympathy. Last of all He declares that His work is finished, and commends His human spirit to the Father who had bestowed it on Him. Take each word separately, see how it applies to you; either say it with Our Lord, or hear it as said to you, and glorify Him for each one of them.

III. Consider what was achieved by Jesus Christ in His Crucifixion. He completed the work of creation and evolution which had been broken off at the point where Adam sinned. Man otherwise had remained on the level of mere nature, a little higher than the beasts, belonging only to the mundane sphere, incapable of raising himself higher. The Crucifixion infused into mankind the higher life, the supernatural breathing of God upon the face of man. Thereby it is in the power of all to become what God had intended that they should be. A new human society was formed, the universal Church, born on Calvary, and proceeding, like Eve, from the wounded side of the second Adam. Though consisting of sinful erring men, it was yet "a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing" (Eph. v. 27). He gave it an indomitable life, as against the ravages of time and human violence; an incorruptible life, as against error. The death of Christ reversed the defeat of Adam, and made humanity triumphant over Satan, it assured the predominance of good over evil. It rendered to the Almighty the full glory that was His due from creatures, appeased His anger, obliterated sin, and opened to men the gates of eternal life. Glorify Jesus for this great work; be faithful to Him in order that you may participate in it.

44.—CONTRARIETIES IN THE PASSION.

I. In the Passion of Our Lord there is a combination of sorrow and consolation. His sorrows were beyond all the united sorrows of the human race; for He carried all the burden of our sins, the sole source of all our miseries, with the full sense of the weight of them, which is deficient in us at present. "Surely He hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows . . . the chastisement of our peace was upon Him" (Isa. liii. 4, 5). His afflictions were both of body and mind, they filled every sense and faculty of His Human Nature, and there was none capable of consoling Him or helping Him. "The waters have come in, even to My soul. . . . I am come into the depths of the sea, and the tempest hath overwhelmed Me" (Ps. lxviii. 2, 3). On the other hand, in the superior part of Our Lord's being, there was imperturbable calm and peace, arising from the Beatific Vision of the Godhead which He always possessed. In the midst of His baptism of fire, He had the peace of a good conscience, the comfort that God was with Him, the knowledge that He was accomplishing the Divine Will, the sight of the heroic constancy of His elect, their triumph over sin and hell, their salvation through His sufferings. So you may rejoice in Our Lord's Passion while sympathizing with His sorrows. In the bitterness of your own trials and disappointments you may yet possess peace and consolation; you will find in Him the strength to bear them with patience, and dignity, and eternal profit.

II. We find also in the Passion a combination of the deepest abasement and the highest magnificence. Extremes meet. The cross is at once a malefactor's gibbet and a royal throne. Our Lord is at the same moment dishonoured and glorified. Christ abased Himself in the supper-room to wash the feet of His disciples, and in the garden by the exhibition

of His weakness and prostration. He was treated as a criminal, a blasphemer, an impostor, a fool. He suffered the extremest indignities, being buffeted, spat upon, scourged, stripped, crucified between vulgar thieves in the sight of an immense assemblage. Yet at the same time what grandeur He exhibits. Angels minister to Him in His agony, His capturers are thrown to the ground by His mere word, He restores the ear of Malchus. He calmly asserts His Divinity before the Sanhedrim, and cites them before His tribunal as Supreme Judge. The stern Roman governor is perturbed, and quails before His silence. While dying He speaks as God to the repentant thief. On His death the sun is obscured, the dead rise, the sacred veil is rent asunder, all men are stricken with terror, and the executioners confess Him to be the Son of God. Adore Our Lord in the splendour of His Passion. Humiliation and suffering will bring you exaltation before God and man, in time and in eternity.

III. The Crucifixion exhibits supreme justice and supreme mercy. Evil is allowed to exert the whole of its ruthless force unhindered, and yet it is conquered. Perfect compensation for sin is exacted, yet perfect forgiveness is accorded. Humanity had offended in one of its members, and humanity expiated the offence in another. Mankind (including Jesus) bore the full consequences of all its sins; and yet mankind (excluding Jesus) escaped from the substantial part of those consequences. To our imperfect comprehension justice and mercy appear to be contradictories; if we dwell on the thought of one, we unconsciously exclude the other; the assertion of the one seems to involve the suppression of the other; in our ideas we make justice a cruel harshness, mercy an invertebrate weakness. Here we see them both combined in one infinite perfection, and each one perfectly satisfied. Adore the infinities of Divine Power and Wisdom exerted by God in order to bring you into your present condition of grace, and into the assurance of future happiness. How admirable and how tender are all His works!

45.—THE CAUSE OF CHRIST'S DEATH.

I. Our Blessed Lord's sufferings and death were voluntary; "He was offered because it was His own will" (Isa. liii. 7). He also said: "I lay down My life. . . . No man taketh it away from Me: but I lay it down of Myself, and I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again" (John x. 17, 18). Hence it may be concluded that the separation of His soul from His body was not the result of the physical violence He endured, but of His own direct volition. This view accords with Christ's supremacy as Lord of life and death, His power as God, and the fulness of deliberate choice with which He died for us. The Jews were not able to kill Him before the appointed moment arrived. During the Passion, and especially in the Agony of Gethsemani, He endured many times over, what was sufficient to have caused death, but He did not die till He had Himself pronounced the decree: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit" (Luke xxiii. 46). Then He allowed His bodily and mental sufferings to take effect; He suspended the divine influx which made Him immortal; He allowed death to approach, as He had given permission to the temple-guards to seize Him in the garden. It will be a most meritorious act of virtue, if you, when dying, conform your will perfectly to the will of God, and surrender your soul in voluntary sacrifice, in union with the death of Jesus Christ.

II. The physical sufferings of Our Lord were quite sufficient to have caused His death, if creatures had any power over His indomitable divine life. But the details show that death did not result from these sufferings. In the ordinary course, the fear and sadness "unto death," the long watching and fasting, the outrages, the scourging, the bearing of the cross, and the process of crucifixion, would have led to a gradual failing of strength, and death by exhaustion. Cru-

cifixion was a very lingering death; hence the arrangements for breaking the legs of the three sufferers, and Pilate's surprise at Our Lord's rapid collapse. Two circumstances were unusual—the suddenness of death, and the fulness of vigour which Our Lord showed at the last. Though His bodily frame was crushed and broken, His mind was active, dwelling on the prophecies, observing those who surrounded Him, attending to all details. The loud piercing cry at the moment of dissolution shows Him to have been still possessed of much physical strength. There was some other unseen, internal cause of death. Sympathize with your Lord. Ask Him to give you strength and self-possession in your death.

III. It was revealed to St. Bridget that Jesus died of a broken heart. This accords with the prophecy: "I am poured out like water . . . My heart is become like wax in the midst of My bowels" (Ps. xxi. 15). And again, as it is in the Hebrew: "Reproach hath broken My heart" (Ps. lxviii. 21). The investigations of science have verified this. The facts of the agony in the garden indicate that Our Lord was at the point of death from paralysis of the heart's functions caused by His mortal anguish. The angel gave Him new strength, and the heart's action became so violent as to expel the blood through the pores of the body. This was the agony or struggle against the horror from the sight of our sins. This same agony, renewed on the cross, caused the rupture which is called a broken heart. Such a death is always accompanied by a piercing cry, and by the effusion of collected blood into the pericardium, where it is disintegrated into red-clot and serum, "blood and water." Thus it was that the love of Jesus for us and the weight of our sins were the actual and immediate cause of His death, and led to the complete outpouring of all His Precious Blood. This was the real rending of the veil of the Holy of Holies. You then really caused Our Lord's death by your sins. Repent of them, avoid repeating that act of deicide. Appreciate Our Lord's love, and love Him in return.

46.—THE DESCENT INTO HELL.

I. David, speaking in the person of the Messias after death, says: "Thou hast made known to Me the ways of life" (Ps. xv. 11); and again it is written: "I will penetrate to all the lower parts of the earth, and will behold all that sleep, and will enlighten all that hope in the Lord" (Eccli. xxiv. 45). This earth is the smallest department of the world of mankind. There are other, far greater realms beyond, which were interested in the victory of the Redeemer over sin. To all these it was necessary that the Messias should be proclaimed as Lord of the living and the dead. The body of Jesus remained on the cross, still united with the Divinity though life had departed; the soul of Jesus, also united with the Divine Person of the Word, went at once to review all the other "ways of life" which it had not yet experienced. While darkness, horror, and grief prevailed around the dishonoured Body, the Soul of Christ proceeded, splendid with divine glory, living and vigorous, to assert His victory and supreme domination in the greater world of human souls. So will it be with you and all the elect of Christ. At the moment of death you will pass into a larger world, a fuller life of freedom, activity and glory. You can afford to wait patiently and suffer uncomplainingly, knowing what is in store for you.

II. According to Scripture, the "hell" to which Our Lord descended was principally Limbo, or Abraham's bosom, the abode of the just who had already lived, and who could not enter into the eternal kingdom till the first-born of mankind should have opened the way. Isaias had foretold that the Messias would "preach relief to the captives, and deliverance to them that are shut up" (Isa. lxi. 1). St. Peter further says, "For this cause also was the Gospel preached to the dead" (1 Pet. iv. 6); and he speaks of some who were undergoing purgation for their negligence during life, and

who needed to be enlightened. "Also He came and preached to those spirits who were in prison, who in time past had been incredulous . . . in the days of Noah" (1 Pet. iii. 19, 20). All the just, from the days of Adam, were waiting in Limbo for their Redeemer—Abraham, Moses and David, the prophets and St. John the Baptist, the Innocents, Holy Simeon and St. Joseph. Moses and Elias no doubt had enlightened them after the Transfiguration, but now the Expected of all nations Himself appeared among them. He made known to them the whole course of the mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption, and made them happy with the assurance that entrance into heaven was close at hand. What a joy this was for those weary souls! So will Our Lord visit you when you are in the darkness of sorrow, longing for the time when you will enter into your rest. Be patient. You will never be called upon to wait so long as did those holy souls, and you have much more comfort than ever fell to them.

III. Revelation says nothing to indicate that Christ visited the hell of those lost eternally. Some suppose that He must have made His triumph known to them, and have revealed the fidelity of God to the promises which they would not accept, and reproached them for their incredulity, and justified His judgments before them. It may be that this is implied in Our Lord's penetrating to all the lower parts of the earth and beholding all that sleep (Eccli. xxiv. 45). They would certainly have to receive such a revelation, either then or later. But whenever it might be, it was not for their conversion and salvation, but for their conviction and judgment. Their will was confirmed in obstinacy and adhesion to evil; nothing in the future life would be able to soften the hearts of those who had resisted God's tender love on earth. There are many such among men: greater enlightenment only makes them more blind, grace hardens their hearts, the sight of goodness moves them to fury. Is this in any sense your case?

47.—THE RESURRECTION.

I. "His sepulchre shall be glorious" (Isa. xi. 10). The extremity of Christ's abasement is the first beginning of His glory. Everything had appeared to be at an end. The shepherd was stricken and the flock dispersed (Zach. xiii. 7). One more was added to the multitude of lost causes. Evil had again triumphed over good. Satan and his instruments on earth were jubilant. Pilate was uneasy, but relieved that all was over. The chief priests felt that Judaism had escaped from the greatest peril that as yet had threatened it, and that it had taken a new lease of existence. The believers in Jesus had lost all heart; His name was to them no more than a memory of a disappointment, an illusion perhaps. There was only one who kept the faith in the silence of her heart, the Mother of Jesus. The tension of men's minds was relaxing; when suddenly the rumour ran that the Dead had risen, and evidence accumulated that He had been seen alive. Dread and awe and despair invaded the minds of Herod and Pilate, Pharisees and Chief Priests. Satan perceived that he was conquered at the moment of his greatest success. Never had there been so sudden and complete a revulsion, such a victory for the cause of God. That cause is yours. That history repeats itself continually in each man's life, and in the Church. To all the followers of Jesus will come similar disappointments and similar triumphs. Give glory to your Lord.

II. "Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell; nor wilt Thou give Thy Holy One to see corruption" (Ps. xv. 10). The Resurrection was the necessary termination of Our Lord's Passion. Death could not hold dominion over the Son of God. The Sacred Body, elevated by its union with the Divinity, could not pass through corruption into dust. These things are necessary stages in our evolution, in order that all which is of sin in us may be eradicated, and our bodies re-formed afresh, adapted to the conditions of

heavenly life. In Our Lord's case, it would have been a retrogression, an undoing of the work of God, a recalling of His gift, if, after matter and human nature had completed their cycle by being united with the Divinity, this union had been broken by the return of the Sacred Body to original dust. Further, as being our true Life, and as being Lord of life and death, Jesus necessarily triumphed over death, and His triumph was more manifest in His submitting to death and rising from it by His own power, than if He had not undergone it. Again, it was the fitting reward merited by Our Lord's unparalleled sufferings. "According to the multitude of My sorrows in My heart, Thy comforts have given joy to My soul" (Ps. xciii. 19). Congratulate with Our Lord on His supremacy over the universal domination of death. Thank Him that He will make its domination over you only temporary, and that He will grant you one day to rise superior to it.

III. Our Lord's Resurrection was necessary on our account as well. 1. It established the faith of the Apostles, and through them of all mankind in His Divinity; and it gave them the energy to propagate His religion. "Predestinated Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of sanctification, by the resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead" (Rom. i. 4). 2. It confirms our confidence, by showing that no obstacles of violence or fraud, no sophisms of incredulity, can cause one iota of His words to fail. He, and His Church, and His elect will in like manner triumph over the world, the flesh, and the devil. 3. It is the assurance of our resurrection and glory. "Christ is risen from the dead, the first-fruits of them that sleep. . . . And as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive" (1 Cor. xv. 20, 22). You can hardly calculate the immense influence that the Resurrection of Christ has on your life and your happiness. It gives you a definite certainty as to the hereafter, it is the solution of the most urgent problems of humanity, it is your comfort and strength in life and death

48.—THE MANIFESTATION OF THE RESURRECTION.

I. "If Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith also is vain" (1 Cor. xv. 14). There is no more important fact than the Resurrection. It was the greatest of Our Lord's miracles. He proposes it to the Jews as the final proof of His divine authority (Matt. xii. 39, 40). The Apostles considered themselves as appointed to witness to this in particular, and they rest the claim of their gospel on the fact that its author was Jesus, whom God raised from the dead the third day. They tell us too that all our hopes for this life and the next depend on the Resurrection; and that without it we should "be of all men the most miserable" (1 Cor. xv. 19). In consequence, we may call it the corner-stone of the Christian system, and of all that is built on Christianity, of the civilization of the world, and of all liberty, benevolence, morality, and well-being. The risen Christ not only lives now in His Human Nature, but He has a permanent life in the souls of His faithful followers. This life in us is a standing proof to the world of the truth and power of religion, it is one of the chief manifestations of God and recommendations of His law. Take care that Christ so live in you. Without this, your religion is vain as regards yourself, and powerless for any good influence in the world.

II. Consider the character of the evidence for the Resurrection. Our Lord remained on earth for forty days, and appeared at frequent intervals to St. Mary Magdalene, St. Peter and the disciples at Jerusalem and Emmaus, and to five hundred at once in Galilee. He submitted to the test demanded by St. Thomas, and at a later date appeared in

vision to Saul, a most bitter opponent of Christianity, and converted him. These all bore witness to the miracle by word, by the tenor of their lives, and by their constancy under torments and martyrdom. The evidence of sight was granted but to the few; to others was given only the evidence of their testimony. "Him God raised up the third day, and gave Him to be made manifest, not to all the people, but to witnesses preordained of God" (Acts x. 40, 41). Our Lord might indeed have done more. He might have appeared in His glorious invulnerable body before the tribunals where He had been condemned. He might have had the miracle registered, like His birth, in the annals of the Roman Empire. But such is not the way of Divine Providence. God makes knowledge accessible to all, but He does not force conviction. Faith in divine truths is the product of sufficient evidence united to purity of soul, earnest desire, readiness to believe, humble submission and prayer. Cultivate these qualities, or the most obvious truths of religion will evade your merely natural powers.

III. The sufficiency of the evidence of the Resurrection is shown by its all but universal acceptance. Its sufficiency is shown even by the perversity of those who rejected it. They did not examine the case and give it a fair hearing. The chief priests determined not to recognize the Resurrection on any terms; they bribed the guards of the sepulchre, suppressed their testimony, and invented a theory of their own to explain the facts; this was widely promulgated, and, no doubt, deterred many from embracing Christianity. Such men are impervious to all proof. Had the miracle been forced upon them, it would have been to them no more than an isolated historical fact and not a saving truth. Intellectual consent might be compelled, but this would not constitute a meritorious act of faith in Jesus the Redeemer; their hearts would still have remained hardened against Him. Be on your guard that you do not imitate the Jews, and mistake obstinate resistance for frank sincerity.

49.—THE LAST WORDS OF CHRIST.

I. "He upbraided them with their incredulity and hardness of heart" (Mark xvi. 14). It is remarkable how frequently the Apostles, after their long training, their knowledge of Scripture prophecies, their sight of miracles, disbelieved the evidence of the Resurrection, and how continually Our Lord had to reproach them on that account. This, however, was very different from the malignant incredulity of the chief priests and ancients; it arose from human weakness, instability and grossness of mind, and was without real malice. Therefore Our Lord renewed the proofs of His Resurrection again and again, with infinite patience and love, till all were finally convinced. The disciples were by no means excusable for their incredulity; they were resisting sufficient evidence, they were showing great want of confidence in Our Lord. From this we may learn that there may be serious faults in even good people, that grace does not destroy all the weaknesses of nature, and that, however much we may have received from God, there is still a fund of hard-heartedness in us. Be patient therefore with the slowness and incredulity of others; and be not so rash as to class with the obstinate Pharisees those who are perhaps no worse than the disciples. Perhaps even now you are unfaithful, and resisting some unwelcome demand of God; and you may be giving occasion to Our Lord to reproach you.

II. A considerable portion of Our Lord's discourses turned upon the constitution of His Church. He spoke to the Apostles of the future of the Kingdom of God on earth; He appointed St. Peter to be their chief, and confirmed his faith that he might support the others; He bestowed on them the power of working miracles, of forgiving sins, of conferring the sacraments; He commissioned

them to preach the Gospel to every creature in His name, and to baptize them into union with the Church and with Himself. He opened their minds to the comprehension of the Scriptures, and qualified them to deal with other necessities and other questions which should arise. He promised them the Holy Ghost and His own abiding presence to the end of the world; and with this He gave the Church indefectible life and assured protection against error and the power of hell. He finally confirmed the authority of the Apostolic Church over all men, by the promise of eternal life to those who should believe, and the threat of eternal condemnation to those who should resist. There are also many other things that Jesus said which are not written but were committed to the Church for us; but the words which are written are sufficient for us, that we may believe and recognize the authority of His Church; they show us clearly that he who hears the Church, hears Christ and the Father who sent Him. Thank Our Lord for so clearly revealing your duty, and thus saving you from the uncertainties and responsibilities of being your own sole guide.

III. "Lifting up His hands He blessed them. And it came to pass, whilst He blessed them, that He departed from them" (Luke xxiv. 50, 51). The last words of Our Lord pronounced on earth were words of blessing poured forth on the Apostles, on the Church, and on all mankind. Then the Apostles went forth to their labour in the world. These words of Jesus were the counterpart of the words of malediction pronounced by God on the natural ancestors of the human race, when they went forth from the garden of Eden for their labours. The Church was blessed to "increase and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it, and rule over . . . all living creatures that move upon the earth" (Gen. i. 29). That blessing has been most efficacious; it has come upon you also; be faithful in all things great and small and you will receive its fulness.

50.—THE ASCENSION.

I. The day had come for Our Lord to conclude the long series of His mysteries, to return whence He came, and to take His place upon the throne of David for ever, on the right hand of His Father. Henceforth He appears no more on earth till He comes from heaven at the last day as the Judge of mankind. He went forth to His triumph humbly, as usual; He left Jerusalem on foot among His disciples, ascended the neighbouring Mount of Olives, and thence went up to heaven. But how great was the invisible glory of that day! Millions of souls came forth from their long detention, souls of Jews and Gentiles, who had served God according to their condition and desired His kingdom; the angelic host came forth to meet them, and with this double escort Christ ascended to His Father. We cannot picture to ourselves the jubilation that filled all the unseen universe, the surpassing splendour of the glorified Humanity of Jesus Christ the delight of the souls redeemed, the confusion of Satan and hell, the glory of the heavenly Father. Therefore is this a day of triumphant joy to the Church on earth. Turn your thoughts away from the miseries and dangers of this life, and be comforted at the thought of what awaits you.

II. The departure of Our Lord was necessary for Him. The full course of human life included His entrance into heaven and the reception of His reward. This completes the parallel between His life and ours, and shows us the whole of our destiny. As God, no reward was possible for Our Lord; He possesses supreme elevation, and glory that cannot be increased. But in His Human Nature Jesus merited reward and the highest elevation. 1. He was victor over Satan, sin, and death, over human weakness and misery, which He had passed through unscathed. 2. He was a worker; for, beyond all the rest of men, He had laboured and done good; and thereby He exerted a universal and

eternal influence. 3. He was a sufferer, for He endured in body and in mind more than all mankind, since He bore in full and with perfect comprehension of it, the burden of the sins of humanity. So, as man, Jesus holds the first place among His race, which is called the right hand of the Father. These are the three elements of your life here and reward hereafter—struggle, labour and suffering. They are painful and often discouraging. But you are happy if you receive a larger share than usual of them, for they will bring you into closer association with Christ in the glory which results from them.

III. The departure of Our Lord, although a painful loss, was necessary to the Apostles, the Church, and to us. He says of it: "It is expedient for you that I go; for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you: but if I go I will send Him to you" (John xvi. 7). The Holy Ghost was to give permanent life and vigour to what Christ had commenced. He also said, "I go to prepare you a place" (John xiv. 2); so that His departure from us now enables us to enter His presence immediately after our death. It was further necessary that He should cease to exist among us in His visible Humanity, in order that He might be present with us everywhere under the form of the Most Holy Eucharist. He also left us in order that we may have the merit of living by faith and not by sight, and that the full enjoyment of Him may be matter of future hopes rather than of present possession. It is further in accordance with the general law of Providence that He should not speak to us and rule us in His own person, but through the ministry of others; and that He should allow the natural energies in human nature to work out their evolution without visible intervention from above. Our Lord's absence from your sight must not make you think that He has forgotten you; He bears you in His heart as if He were visibly present; He is engaged always on your interests before His Father; and also He is really present with you.

51.—THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

I. Love is the last and highest service that man can render. All else leads up to love and ends in it. Faith itself is the basis only; it needs to be made perfect by charity, and to receive its practical and efficient form from charity. Jesus Christ is the image and manifestation of the Divinity; we see God in Him, and we love God in loving Him. As man, Our Lord is deserving of all our love, and He possesses in an eminent degree all those qualities which command human love. 1. He has supreme beauty as human and as divine, on earth and in glory, in His person, His character, His life. "Thou art beautiful above the sons of men" (Ps. xliv. 3). 2. His words made the hearts of men burn within them while He was on earth. "Grace is poured forth in Thy lips" (Ps. xliv. 3). We have these words written in the Gospels, and whispered by Him in our souls. 3. The works of Jesus towards men are full of benevolence, generosity, utility, grandeur. 4. His magnificent gifts are another inducement to love Him. He has given us all that we have, and much more than we are as yet able to appreciate. He has given us Himself with all His infinity. None other has bestowed so much. Consider each of these points separately; see how they show the surpassing goodness of Our Lord, how much He deserves from you in return, and how little you have rendered to Him hitherto.

II. Jesus says to you, "My son, give Me thy heart" (Prov. xxiii. 26). Theologians distinguish four expressions of love, or forms of sentiment which we may feel towards God and Jesus Christ. 1. The love of complacency. By this we take pleasure and delight in Our Lord, rejoicing at His goodness and perfections, at His happiness, greatness and glory, at the adoration and love which He receives from so many. 2. The love of benevolence. This consists in wishing well to another. Our good-will can confer nothing on the infinite Son of God; yet we may wish Him to

receive all praise and honour from creatures. We may wish that we had the power to do something for Him; and we may actually promote His accidental glory by making Him known to others, and carrying out His will and His work on earth. 3. The love of esteem. We show this by esteeming Jesus, His doctrine, His service, above our own interests, and pleasures, and possessions; by readiness to sacrifice all these for His sake; by saying with the Apostle: "I esteem all things to be but loss . . . and count them but as dung, that I may gain Christ" (Phil. iii. 8). 4. The love of desire, by which we aspire after the sight of Our Lord and union with Him, "having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ" (Phil. i. 23). Declare your affection for your Lord in each of these ways, and consider how you can express it effectively in your actions.

III. The love of Our Lord needs to be carefully cultivated and increased by practice. Being invisible to us, He will disappear from our minds unless we take measures to keep Him always before us. 1. We should choose as subjects for our meditations the life, actions, virtues of Jesus Christ, and the interior sentiments of His Heart. 2. We should carefully keep ourselves free from all sin. Sin is the contradictory of Christ, it drives Him from His abode in our hearts, it obscures the vision of the soul, and prevents us from seeing Him and hearing His voice. 3. We should frequently seek the presence and conversation of Christ in prayer, and especially before the altars where He dwells: above all we should unite ourselves with Him as to body and soul in Holy Communion. 4. When we are unable to devote ourselves to lengthened prayer, we may raise our minds to Our Lord by silent remembrance for a moment, and speak to Him in brief ejaculations of love. It is an aid to this if we keep pictures and images of Him where we can often see them. Inquire of yourself whether you take any means to keep alive the love of Jesus in your heart. Resolve to carry out some practices of devotion with this view.

MEDITATIONS ON CHRISTIAN DOGMA.

TREATISE VI.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

1.—THE PREDESTINATION OF MARY.

I. "The woman whom the Lord hath prepared for my Master's Son" (Gen. xxiv. 44). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the centre of creation; according to St. Paul, "the first-born of all creatures" (Col. i. 15). All things were made by Him, and in His image, and in order to lead up to Him; He is therefore the first conceived in the ideas of God. All that concerns Him is important; every such thing was foreseen and decreed from eternity. Adam, Abraham, David, the prophets, the people of Israel, were great, solely because of Him who was to spring from that stock. St. John the Baptist, who announced Him and prepared the way before His face, was sanctified from his mother's womb, and declared to be the greatest of men. There was one who stood nearer to the Messias than David, who prepared His way more than St. John, *viz.*, the woman who bore to Him the closest of all possible relations, that of mother. Mary gave Jesus of her very substance; for nine months He lived with her life; her blood flowed in His veins, and passed from her heart to His. None could love Our Lord as His Mother did; He loved none as He did His mother. Wonderful were the privileges of the Magi, the shepherds, the Apostles; vastly more so were those of Mary. She was greater and holier, and therefore more efficiently predestinated than any other of the human race after her Child. Pay her the homage and love due to her singular and august position.

II. "The Most High hath sanctified His own tabernacle; God is in the midst thereof" (Ps. xlv. 5, 6). Every one of the elect is chosen and predestined by God in Jesus Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. i. 4). Those who have a special function in the service of God are ordained to it and prepared for it. Our Lord is the first, and He "was predestinated Son of God in power" (Rom. i. 4). Next, standing out beyond all the rest of mankind in the order of God's predestination, is the Blessed Virgin. No other one

of the human race was necessary for the Incarnation. Not one of us would be missed had we not come into existence. But such a mother was necessary in order that the Son of God should be made flesh. The Virgin-Mother is the correlative of God made man. Her relation to Him joins her necessarily with Him in the divine disposition of things. She is predestined in the predestination of her Child. She is therefore a special object of divine care, and is, in an eminent degree, the daughter of the Eternal Father. The Lord was with her in a unique manner, and therefore she was decreed to be full of grace and blessed amongst women (Luke i. 28). Endeavour to correspond to your predestination as the Blessed Virgin did to hers.

III. As a consequence of her eternal predestination, Our Lady was proclaimed by God in figure and prophecy as no other has been except Jesus Christ. God spoke of her to the serpent in Eden: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman . . . she shall crush thy head" (Gen. iii. 15). To Achaz the sign was given: "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son and His name shall be called Emmanuel" (Isa. vii. 14). Another prophet said: "The Lord hath created a new thing upon the earth: a woman shall compass a man" (Jerem. xxxi 22). Our Lady was typified by Jael, Judith and Esther, all of whom delivered the people of God from bondage, and were declared "blessed among women." She was represented in figure by the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the word of God on the tables of stone, and a measure of the bread from heaven given to the Israelites in the desert; also by the propitiatory or mercy-seat on which God rested between the Cherubim. Israel therefore watched for the appearance of the Mother of the Messias as for the first gleam of dawn on the mountain tops heralding the rising sun. The position of the Blessed Virgin is greater still in the hearts of Christians and in the Church, but it is greater beyond all in the divine plan of Redemption. Do not fail in honouring her whom God has so honoured.

2.—THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION. 1.

I. Adam and Eve came into existence immaculate, in the state of grace. This was to have been the birthright of humanity; but Adam, at the suggestion of Satan, chose the lower state of the mere natural existence, and so lost the power of transmitting what He had rejected. Thenceforth all men are born defective, deprived of supernatural life; and in that fallen state they resemble Satan in his inaptitude for God and propension towards evil. This privation of grace and the higher life is the state of original sin. From this the Blessed Virgin was preserved. She was antecedently liable to it, as being descended by ordinary generation from Adam. She was saved by the Redemption, as we are, but in a better way, by prevention, and not by cure. No act of hers nor of her parents, but the intervention of the merits of her Divine Son, saved her from the torrent which was about to descend upon her. She came into life then, like Adam and Eve, adorned with sanctifying grace, living with the supernatural life, possessing God with her. This is her Immaculate Conception. Our Lady can say, and she alone: "I am clean and without sin; I am unspotted and there is no iniquity in me" (Job xxxiii. 9). Admire here the great goodness of God, the great power of the merits of Jesus, who is "wonderful in His saints" (Ps. lxvii. 36), and most of all in His Mother.

II. Holy Scripture, in the most significant way, associates the woman with her Child in the triumph over Satan. At the moment of the fall God foretold a second struggle of a man and a woman, which was to retrieve the first struggle with the serpent. A second Adam was to take up that part of the task in which the first Adam had failed, and introduce the strain of supernatural life into the race. As Eve furnished the occasion for the sin of Adam, her sex was to be rehabilitated by the action of another woman, who was to furnish the material body and blood to the Victim of the

redeeming sacrifice. Christ reversed the destructive act of Adam, Mary reversed the co-operation of Eve in it. The woman shares in the enmity of her Child against the serpent and has a part in the crushing of his head. The enmity of Satan was not directed only against the Saviour, but "the dragon was angry against the woman"; "and he persecuted the woman who brought forth the Man-child" (Apoc. xii. 17, 13). Thus strangely does God associate the creature with the work of the Creator, one of the redeemed ones with the Redeemer. No one may put asunder the woman and her Child thus joined together by God. Christianity requires both the worship of Jesus and the veneration of His Mother. We need both His merits and her intercession.

III. The triumph over Satan is triumph over sin. Union with Jesus in that triumph is similarity to Him in sinlessness. This, even more than the material relationship, was the bond between Him who possessed the Divine Nature, and the Mother who was only human. It would not have reversed the disgrace of Eve if Mary had not been made equal to her as at first, but only equal to Eve in her fallen state. The triumph of Our Lord would not have been absolutely stainless, if it could be said that He was the Son of one who had formerly been under the dominion of Satan and sin. The devil would have some compensation in defeat, if he could impugn the character of the Mother of his Conqueror. But God foretold that the serpent could do no more than "lie in wait for her heel"; and St. John further tells us how the woman escaped unharmed from all the snares of the dragon, through the protecting power of God (Apoc. xii.). The Blessed Mother of God is, then, an impregnable bulwark against the power of hell, and is distinguished by her successful enmity against Satan, and his unchanging hate towards her. This indicates not only her dignity but her office. She is our natural protector. If we be on her side we shall be on the side of Jesus.

3.—THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION. 2.

I. Science teaches us that, where there is an apparent gap in the chain of life, there must be some being which fills it. There was one important deficiency; there was no example of a simple human being who was sinless and full of grace. The only two who were so created hastened promptly to disembarrass themselves of the great privilege at the mere word of the tempter. The completeness of God's work in Creation and Redemption required that there should be an example of what His grace was able to effect in human nature, a being that we could look up to as the ideal of simple creatures in the class below the Divine Man. Many had risen to great holiness by repentance for their sins, others by innocence which they never lost; Jeremias and John the Baptist had further been purified from sin before their birth. Still, in one remote corner of human life Satan had found a stronghold; all were, in the first moments of existence, subject to him by original sin. It was necessary in one case to drive him from that last retreat, and exhibit one being absolutely free from sin and full of all human perfection. For the glory of God, the Blessed Virgin was preserved from even the indeliberate inherited stain of sin; she was conceived immaculate. Honour her as the delight of the Almighty, the highest of His works, the fullest manifestation of His power and holiness, the example of perfect human life among mere creatures.

II. "There shall no evil come to thee, nor shall the scourge come near thy dwelling" (Ps. xc. 10). The dignity of the Son of God required that His Mother should be conceived immaculate. Sin is infinitely hateful to Jesus Christ; it is the direct contrary of God; its action on Him was death-dealing; there could be no possible fellowship between Christ and Belial. It is inconceivable that the Holy One of God could have been born of an ordinary sinful mother, that He could have assumed to His Divinity flesh and blood which had been infected with the horrible putrefaction of sin, that

He could have dwelt in a tabernacle which had not been reserved for Him alone, but had been the dwelling-place of the abomination of desolation. The holiness which becometh the actual House of God should be something more than the patched-up sanctity which overlies a foundation of original corruption. Therefore He "set His tabernacle in the sun" (Ps. xviii. 6); in a place of brilliant purity. He prepared it for Himself in advance; not merely for a few days or years, but from the commencement of its existence. Learn hence how holy must be your soul if you would have Jesus to dwell in it. The smallest stain in it is loathsome to Him, and impedes the operation of His grace.

III. "Fear not: thou shalt not die; for this law is not made for thee, but for all others" (Esth. xv. 12, 13). These are the accents of generosity and love. Jesus could not begrudge His Mother the highest gift of His grace, and bestow less on her than on His Precursor, Jeremias, and Adam and Eve. He could not cast His Mother to be the prey of the wolves of sin. God the Father had predestined her, the Holy Ghost had sanctified her as His spouse; God the Son could not but bestow this special grace upon His Mother. The magnificent generosity of God, who rewards eternally a cup of cold water given to a disciple, gave of necessity an immense grace to the Mother who gave Him the Precious Blood. How could He leave her a moment without supernatural life, who consented to give Him natural life? She gave herself entirely to Jesus, to co-operate in His work of Redemption, and thereby she merited to receive the first and greatest share in its fruits. The Immaculate Conception was a gift worthy of God; to withhold it would be an economy unworthy of a man and a son. Learn hence that if you be faithful to Jesus, He will grudge you nothing that is in His power to grant, and in your capacity to receive. Thank Him for encouraging you by His generosity to His Mother; rejoice at the high privilege that she was worthy to receive.

4.—THE GRACES AND MERITS OF MARY

I. Exemption from original sin carries with it a great many other privileges, for that sin involves a great many consequences. It causes a deterioration in soul and body, intellect, will, and every other faculty; it introduces into us ignorance, concupiscence, malice, and a propensity to every kind of evil. Even when we recover grace, many of the effects of sin still remain. The holiest of men is not exempt from weaknesses; and the greatest labour of his life is the unceasing struggle against his own semi-dormant passions. He attains success only through countless failures; and, at the best, he is but a restored and buttressed ruin. During this life, peril is never absent, victory never secure. The singular grace of God placed the Blessed Virgin on an altogether higher level. She was exempt from every one of the miseries and sad liabilities of sin from the very first. The last stage of the greatest saint's life is far inferior to Mary's first stage in grace. She began her ascent where the greatest saints left off: according to the prophet, "The mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared on the top of the mountains" (Isa. ii. 2). All these exceeding graces, Mary's union with God, God's love for her, were only in proportion to the high office to which she was called; they were all required in preparation for the unexampled dignity of the Divine Maternity. The magnificence of God as exhibited in the universe which He has prepared for our habitation, exceeds all our calculations, and all our wonderful powers of investigation, and expression, and imagination even. Much more magnificent is the bounty of God in the supernatural order, and especially in that one being who is superior to all the other works of His hand. It is not only due to the Blessed Virgin, it is due to God that you should pay homage to such an exhibition of His infinite power and holiness.

II. The graces of God need to be supplemented by our action. We have to accept them, make use of them, correspond to them in proportion to their greatness, and so

make them efficient. This the Blessed Virgin did with the greatest fidelity and perfection beyond all other creatures. Her life is not to be considered as inactive and inglorious because so little is recorded of her. It was an interior life, and was most truly "hidden with Christ in God" (Col. iii. 3). The value of our service of God depends not so much on the opportunities of external action, but on the dispositions of our souls and their attachment to God. The life-work of Our Lady was of necessity carried on in obscurity, but it was of a higher kind, and it contributed more to the advantage of mankind and the glory of God than all the labours of the Apostles. She was continually in the presence of God; she learned from Him during the intimate communications of the thirty years; she practised every virtue in a sublime degree, she suffered a life-long martyrdom, she advanced daily with giant steps in the path of holiness. Her fidelity was more, if possible, than her graces. As Our Lord said, she was more blessed in hearing His word and keeping it, than even in the privilege of being His Mother according to the flesh. Learn hence to be faithful to your graces Be sure that mediocre talents and obscure position do not preclude you from the greatest merit and reward.

III. Mary's graces received, and fidelity rendered, are the measure of her supernatural glory, and of the position which she holds in heaven and in the Church. Of all men and all angels, none received such high favours from God, none was brought into such close relations with the Divinity, none was so faithful to grace, none loved God so intensely. In proportion to this she has received "good measure, and pressed down, and shaken together, and running over" (Luke vi. 38). So she holds the highest place in heaven, and is nearest of all to her Divine Son. So she is Queen of earth and heaven, Queen of angels and of men. So too is her power great to intercede for us. Your veneration for her, your confidence in her prayers, your imitation of her virtues, your praise of God on her account, ought to be in due proportion to her graces, merits and favour with God.

5.—THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

I. "Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array?" (Cant. vi. 9). The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin was indeed like the dawn, caused by the sun, and announcing the approach of day. Mary appeared, the early reflection, by her grace and sinlessness, of the first beams of the Sun of justice. That dawn was eagerly looked for during the long night of the old dispensation, continually promised and prefigured. Our Lady is compared to the moon, fair and beautiful, a subordinate luminary, with no light of its own, but shining with a reflected brightness. She is also "the woman clothed with the sun" (Apoc. xii. 1), bright with the sun's brightness, with the glory of Jesus Christ, because she is the image of His virtues, and has her dignity from Him. She is terrible to the hosts of hell, as being the only one over whom they had never prevailed, and as the Mother of their Conqueror. As in every other case, the splendour of this work of God was shrouded in humility. Except the parents of Mary perhaps, none knew the greatness of this child of promise. The day which gave joy to the unseen world passed without notice in the sphere where it occurred. She herself did not suspect, till the angel announced it, the designs that God had for her. Consider how God regarded the day of Mary's birth; consider what it was to God the Son who was to be born of her; consider its importance to the world and to you.

II. The day of birth is not usually celebrated by Religion. It is, for the most part, the coming of a child of Adam into an inheritance of sin and sorrow; it is the first stage of a course which will be marked by offences against God, and perhaps may end in eternal loss. The birthday on which the Church congratulates her saints, is the day on which they cast off "the body of this death" and commence their life in

heaven. With the Scripture she says, better is "the day of death than the day of one's birth" (Eccles. vii. 2). Not till that day can it be declared by God that His work is wholly good. With Jesus it was different: the day of His birth is a day of universal joy. Of this fulness of His some have received. The blessedness of His sinless divine birth overflowed upon two others who were connected with Him; and the Church celebrates, besides Christmas Day, the nativities of the Precursor and of the Mother of Jesus. You do not share in that rare privilege; but you have received the grace of a spiritual nativity in Baptism, and it lies with you to make yourself worthy of the further birth to eternal life on the day of your death.

III. Birth is accounted noble when it has been preceded by a line of distinguished ancestors. The Blessed Virgin was of the most noble and splendid descent known to history. She was of the chosen nation, of the royal tribe of Judah, of the house and family of David. Through Abraham, Noah and the patriarchs, the line is carried back unbroken to the first parents, who proceeded from the hand of God. But not for this is the Nativity of Mary honourable. She conferred on her ancestors more glory than she received from them. Their chief title of nobility was that a daughter of their line was to be Mother of the Redeemer of the world. On this account it was that Providence segregated the Jewish nation from all others, and guarded so carefully the direct line of descent, and saved its origin from being lost in the universal obscurity. Our Lady not only ennobled her own family and nation, but all her sex and all humanity. Her influence gave to women, under the Jewish and Christian dispensations, a position of dignity such as was unknown elsewhere; and that position declines wherever the religious honour due to Christ's Mother is neglected. Unite yourself with those who "all blessed her with one voice saying: Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the honour of our people" (Judith xv. 10).

6.—THE PRESENTATION OF THE B. V. M.

I. The law of Moses allowed men and women to make a vow and dedicate themselves, for a time or for life, to the service of God. So did Anna lend her son Samuel to the Lord to be employed about the Tabernacle. The Blessed Virgin also was presented in the temple by another Anne, her mother, in pursuance of a vow. At the age of three she was offered, and till her fifteenth year she remained in the quarters set apart for the widows and young maidens, "who departed not from the temple, by fastings and prayers serving night and day" (Luke ii. 37). The traditions of the Eastern Churches record that this child of grace was, as a special privilege, allowed to pray in the Holy of Holies, where no other but the High Priest once in the year could enter. Those Churches from the earliest times kept up the memory of these events in the Feast of the entry of Mary into the Temple; the Western Church celebrates it as the Presentation. Holy Scripture says: "After her shall virgins be brought to the King . . . they shall be brought into the temple of the King" (Ps. xliv. 15, 16). In imitation of the Blessed Virgin, hundreds of thousands of other virgins have sought a refuge from the world near the tabernacle of God, and dedicated their whole lives to the practice of austere virtue, and the service of God and man. How blessed is the Church in the holy example given by Our Lady, and in the inspiration and strength from the Holy Ghost which have enabled so many to follow in her footsteps! Thank God for the abundant benefits resulting from this devotedness.

II. The presentation of this blessed child in the temple was an act of admirable devotion on the part of SS. Joachim and Anne. They sacrificed that which was most precious to them in the world, the brightness of their home, and the comfort of their declining years. It was an act of generosity to God which cost them many pangs of heart. On the part of the child, consider the ardour with which she abandoned

her father's house for the house of God, and consecrated her virginity and her life to His service. "How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord. . . . Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house" (Ps. lxxxiii. 2, 3, 5). As she prayed there, she thought of the past glories of the first temple erected by Solomon, of the Ark of the Covenant and the presence of God, of the greater glories yet to come which the prophets had foretold; and by her fervent desires she hastened the accomplishment of those promises, little knowing the great part she was to have in them. The presentation to God of His predestined daughter was an offering more pleasing than that of Samuel. She was indeed a lamb without blemish, more worthy of His acceptance than all the sacrifices of preceding centuries. Offer God what you have. Your heart indeed is far from spotless; but if it be contrite and humbled, God in His goodness will not despise it.

III. God had appointed this as the fitting preparation of the Blessed Virgin for the great duties that were before her. "In silence and in hope shall your strength be" (Isa. xxx. 15). Samuel had been prepared in the tabernacle for his work in Israel. St. John the Baptist was in retirement, in the desert, fasting and praying for thirty years, in preparation for his brief ministry on the banks of the Jordan. The Mother of the Lord needed in like manner to be withdrawn from the contaminations and distractions of a world that was not worthy of her. She belonged entirely to the Lord, and was not to be engaged in any other service. She had to exercise herself in daily communion with God, in view of her further union with the Word of God as her Son. She had to perfect herself and advance from step to step in sanctification, till she attained the degree which was worthy of the Divine Maternity. So have all the works of God to be prepared. Retirement from the world, self abnegation and prayer, are the great sources of spiritual strength and efficiency.

7.—THE ESPOUSALS.

I. "A virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David" (Luke ii. 27). The time arrived when, in the ordinary course, the Blessed Virgin had to leave the shelter of the temple and go forth into the world; the time was also at hand appointed for the appearance of the Son of God in human nature. God had prepared in advance not only a mother for the Messias, but also a faithful servant, who should be the representative of the Eternal Father on earth, in watching over, and providing for, and ruling the Child and His Mother. This was Joseph, a just man; he was the eldest male representative of the house of David, the rightful inheritor of the throne and of all the royal prerogatives; he was in some degree related to the Blessed Virgin, who was also descended from David by another line. To noble descent he united lowliness of position; he was a poor artisan working for his daily bread in an obscure village; a representative at once of the mighty and the humble. Divine Providence, ruling all things sweetly, arranged that the Holy Virgin should be given in marriage to this just man, who would subordinate himself to the designs of heaven, and respect the vow of perpetual virginity made by his spouse. He was the "faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath set over His family, to give them meat in season" (Matt. xxiv. 45). Admire the wonderful fidelity of this holy man. Strive like him to be faithful to whatever trust has been laid on you by Divine Providence.

II. This marriage was necessary for the accomplishment of the designs of God. The Messias was to be Son of David. Our Lord derived His physical descent from him through the Blessed Virgin; but as women were not reckoned in legal genealogy, it was through the lawful spouse of His Mother that Christ inherited His royal succession to David. Therefore the Evangelists give us in the Gospels the two lines of

Our Lord's descent. Another reason for this marriage was to maintain till the proper time the secret for Our Lord's divine personality; for according to the divine decree, "when the Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence He is" (John vii. 27). On account of men's perversity, the facts had to be concealed from them for awhile, lest the enemies of Christ should have seized the opportunity of blaspheming against His uncomprehended sanctity, and His Mother's good fame. The Virgin and her Child also required a man's protection during the long years of the Divine Infancy, and the perils of the journey to Bethlehem, and the exile in a foreign land. God appointed no angel to this office, nor an earthly prince at the head of a devoted army, but He made the humble silent carpenter to be "master of His house and ruler over all His possessions" (Ps. cv. 21). How great was the dignity of Joseph! It places him above all the other servants of God. Pay him due veneration for the position which he held, and the virtue he exercised in his duties.

III. This marriage was also necessary for us. It constituted the Holy Family, making it complete in all its members; it sanctified the domestic life, and gave us a model that we needed. The bulk of mankind pass the larger and more important part of their existence in the family state. Hitherto there had been no great ideal manifested of that condition. Kings, priests, martyrs, warriors, legislators had their heroic models; but no one had arisen who was great enough to illustrate the lowly virtues of every-day life without a diminution of his own dignity, till the Son of God became a member of the household of Nazareth. Our Blessed Lady became the model not only of virgins but of matrons. She confirmed and increased the honour in which the Jews had held maternity; and she inaugurated the holy state of virginity, which even the chosen nation had been unable to appreciate. Praise those three holy personages for thus instituting the Christian family. It affords an opportunity for the highest sanctity and the noblest service of God.

8.—THE ANNUNCIATION.

I. "The angel Gabriel was sent from God . . . to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph . . . and the name of the Virgin was Mary" (Luke ii. 26, 27). Five hundred years before, the same archangel had foretold this event to the prophet Daniel, and that holy man fell prostrate before him. A few weeks before, he had appeared to Zachary in the temple, and struck him deaf and dumb in punishment of his incredulity. Now, for the first time, an angel of God bows before one of the fallen race, and speaks to her as the servant of a king might salute a powerful princess. The angel's message was to ask the consent and co-operation of the lowly Virgin in the great mystery of divine power and mercy. In her case, as in all others, God took account of human liberty, and made the divine operations dependent on her free consent. She had full power of choice; she deliberated, and at length acceded to that which God proposed to her. No scene so momentous had occurred since Eve consented to the tempter in Eden. And, until Our Lord first spoke, no word so meritorious, so full of promise of joy to men was pronounced by any human being: "Be it done to me according to Thy word" (Luke i. 38). God asks your consent to some designs of His grace. He wishes to do much in you. Strive to be faithful, obedient, generous in your consent, as was the Holy Virgin.

II. Consider the details of that sublime scene. The messenger of God approaches Mary in the Eden of her sinlessness and union with God. He proposes to her the greatest honour ever conferred on a child of Adam, to be the Mother of the divine Messias. It was a higher dignity than that which the tempter proposed to Eve, "You shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen. iii. 5). Mary, with the true intuition of faith, believes the word of God, but she asks assurance as to the mode of its accomplishment. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, she had

renounced the lower and natural order of life, and had adopted a preternatural idea as her rule. She, first of all the children of Eve, originated the state of perpetual virginity, a germ which, in the kingdom of her Son, was to bear such beautiful fruit, which was to be one of the most fertile, beneficial, divine details of the Church. The Incarnation of the Son ot God had to wait for its accomplishment until a virgin should fit herself to be its instrument, by renouncing the natural order, which seemed necessary for that mystery, and embracing the supernatural order in the spirit of sacrifice and faith. She was ready to forego the glory that every Jewish maiden aspired to, rather than be unfaithful to the divine inspiration which had dictated her vow. She chose the tree of supernatural life, and therefore she merited its fruit, the motherhood of Jesus Christ. The ways of the world often seem more profitable than the ways of God. Have faith, and make the sacrifice, and God will turn all things to your advantage. Natural methods, if discordant with God's will, must end in failure.

III. The Angel assured Mary of God's power to do what is naturally impossible; and at once she gives herself up to do His will: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord" (Luke i. 38). How different she is from Eve in her undoubting faith, her prompt obedience, her preference for the higher course, the absence of self-consciousness, the depreciation of herself in spite of her great dignity. Therefore the Holy Ghost speaks words of benediction to her by the angel and St. Elizabeth, and reverses the malediction pronounced on Eve. The tree of life was now substituted for the tree of knowledge, the supernatural was introduced into the current of the natural life, the angel with the flaming sword was withdrawn from the entrance of the Eden of grace. Eve had led up to the fall; the second Eve now opened the way to Redemption, and accomplished the prophecy of crushing the serpent's head. Always hold to the supernatural. As reason transcends mere physical power, so does the supernatural surpass the efficiency of the natural.

9.—THE VISITATION.

I. The Gospel gives us the history of the Visitation as an important episode in the development of the divine action. Heaven, in the person of the archangel, had paid homage to Our Lady; now, the earth, in the person of St. Elizabeth, recognizes her as "the Mother of my Lord" and God. The venerable and holy woman, wife of the priest of God, humbles herself before her girl-relative, the spouse of the working-man. It is more than a queen who has condescended to come to her: "Whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should visit me?" (Luke i. 43). Again the benediction of the angel is renewed: "Blessed art thou amongst women," and again, as in Genesis and the Apocalypse, the woman is associated inseparably with the Child: "and blessed is the fruit of thy womb" (Luke vii. 42). It was from the revelation of the Holy Ghost that St. Elizabeth understood the mystery; under His inspiration she spoke the words of God. These words form the salutation which all those who recognize the Divinity of Jesus have addressed to His Mother ever since. Make frequent use of the words which the Holy Spirit Himself puts into your mouth. Imitate the inspired woman in the veneration which she, in the name of all generations to come, offered to the Mother of God. It is one of the most efficient ways of honouring Our Lord's Incarnation.

II. The Visitation is not merely an act of charity on the part of the Blessed Virgin towards her aged kinswoman, but it is an exhibition of redeeming power shown by Our Lord while as yet unborn. No sooner had He assumed human nature than He moved His Blessed Mother to convey Him with all haste into the mountains of Judea, that He might, without delay, inaugurate His work in souls by sanctifying His Precursor, John the Baptist. That infant, also unborn, recognized the presence of his Saviour; he was delivered from original sin, and his mother was filled with the Holy

Ghost. "Behold, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped with joy" (Luke i. 44). Of St. John, as well as of Abraham, Our Lord could say: "He rejoiced that he might see My day: he saw it and was glad" (John viii. 56). It is significant that the first sanctifying action of the Redeemer was wrought by means of the Blessed Virgin. Her charity and humility, under divine inspiration, moved her to visit St. Elizabeth; and this afforded Our Lord the opportunity of redeeming a soul from sin. The events of the Gospels are official actions, and not merely personal and private. The Visitation shows us the permanent function of the Blessed Virgin in the economy of Redemption. She is the instrument of Jesus and a channel of grace. Do not forget this office of hers. Ask her to intercede for you, to bring Jesus to your heart, and to help you to recognize Him and rejoice in your new spiritual birth.

III. The Visitation was indicated prophetically of old, when the Ark of God was brought from Gabaa of Benjamin to the house of Obededom. It abode there for "three months, and the Lord blessed Obededom and all his household" (2 Kings vi. 11). So the Blessed Virgin remained three months in the house of Zachary. She was the true Ark of the Covenant, containing the Word of God, not graven on stones, but enshrined in the flesh of His Sacred Humanity. What treasures of blessing, light and grace, this visit must have brought to Zachary and Elizabeth; what continual increase of sanctification to the Precursor, preparing him for his life of austerity and his preaching of the Redeemer! The presence of Mary was the communication of Jesus; He was manifested in her action and virtues. So will it be with you. Belief in Jesus Christ involves devotion and love towards His Blessed Mother. Fervent recognition of her greatness is homage to Our Lord, and will bring you nearer to Him. Let Jesus and His Mother dwell in your heart, and they will fill it with benediction.

10.—THE MAGNIFICAT.

I. The great events of the Old Testament were celebrated by canticles. Thus did Moses, Mary the sister of Moses, Anna, Deborah, Judith, Ezechias, the prophets, proclaim the glories of God and His people. In the New Testament we find three at the beginning of the Gospels. Zachary celebrated the birth of his son, St. John the Baptist, Holy Simeon celebrated the birth of his son, St. John the Baptist, Holy Simeon celebrated the favour granted him of seeing the Messias in the temple, the Blessed Virgin chanted the special canticle of the new dispensation, the canticle of Our Lord's Incarnation, in the Magnificat. St. Elizabeth had spoken of the exultation of her own infant, of the blessedness of Mary and her sublime dignity. To this Our Lady replies under the influence of the Holy Spirit. She first gives praise to God; she refers to Him and not to herself the favours that Elizabeth had celebrated. "My soul doth magnify the Lord." God had indeed magnified her and made her greater than any creature, but she recognizes no greatness except in magnifying Him. She exults not in herself, her praises, her virtues, but in God her Saviour alone. In herself she sees only lowliness undeserving of His notice; she will not consider herself as Queen and Mother but only as "handmaid of the Lord." So should it be with you. All that you have should give glory to God; the greatest glory consists in humbling yourself beneath His hand. "The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things, and thou shalt find grace before God: for great is the power of God alone and He is honoured by the humble" (Eccli. ii. 20-21).

II. Still the Blessed Virgin is not blind to the unexampled favours that she had received from God, or the position to which she had been raised. Gratitude requires that these be fully recognized; humility does not consist in ignoring facts that are honourable. "He that is mighty

hath done great things to me and holy is His name." Mary well knew that to no other had God done such great things. The deliverance of Israel by the hand of Moses, and of Jael, Esther and Judith, the glories of David and Solomon, the graces of patriarchs and prophets, all these were the preparation and figures of what God had wrought in her. Therefore she said, "Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." The prophecy has been accomplished. All ages and all nations have confessed her exalted dignity, and rendered homage to the Mother of their Lord. Even as the false prophet blessed Israel when called upon to curse him, so have Mahomet and Luther and many others declared her praises, celebrated her purity and borne witness, despite themselves, to her influence. Only very few have confessed themselves to be of the seed of the serpent by lying in wait for her heel, and blaspheming their Redeemer through His Mother. Devotion to Our Lady is indeed a sign of true Christian instinct and a presage of predestination.

III. The Holy Virgin then announces in summary the results of the Incarnation. "His mercy is from generation to generation. . . . He hath showed might in His arm. . . . He hath put down the mighty. . . . He hath filled the hungry with good things." All this was done by God in operating the mystery of the Divine Maternity. Such too was the life of Our Lord, and such the work He accomplished by His labours, preaching, and miracles. Similar also is the operation of Our Lord in His Church at all times, and in every individual soul. In you too God shows the might of His arm and the multitude of His mercies, whether you be elect or reprobate. All through, the Blessed Virgin dwells upon the distinction between the proud and the humble, the rich and the poor, and shows you the conditions on which you will obtain a share in the benefits of the Incarnation. Be not high-minded but lowly, not worldly but spiritual, as was Mary herself.

11.—THE DOUBT OF ST. JOSEPH.

I. Besides the parents of the Baptist, there was one other person intimately concerned in the mystery of the Incarnation, to whom it was necessary that it should be revealed: *viz.*, the spouse of Mary. The method of its manifestation was extraordinary, it showed how various are the ways of Divine Providence, and how they serve to elicit different forms of human virtue. The knowledge of the facts and the explanation of the mystery were for a while withheld from St. Joseph. This constituted a trial of the most painful kind, one of the most terrible that could befal a just man. He was drawn different ways by anxiety and doubt, by kindness and sense of justice. Yet, in spite of a turmoil in his mind enough to disturb the balance of judgment, there was no loss of self-control, no precipitate action afterwards to be regretted, no indulgence of the sense of wrong, no bitterness or malevolence. He pondered carefully, he besought the guidance of God, and so he merited the interposition of the angel. See in this how God tries the just as if by fire. See how easy it is to be deceived by appearances, and how even that which is holiest is open to misinterpretation. Beware of rashness in judgment or action, and always ask enlightenment from God before any serious step.

II. Consider the conduct of the Blessed Virgin in this trial. The Eternal Father had favoured her beyond all creatures and raised her to an inconceivable height of sanctity and honour. The Holy Ghost had overshadowed her, and the Word of God Incarnate dwelt with her. During three months her life had been an ecstasy of divine contemplation and love, in the company of Zachary and Elizabeth. With them she could discourse freely on the mysteries of God, as

prophesied of old, and now being accomplished. She left this retirement for the outer world, and suddenly in her cup of sweetness she found a drop of extremest bitterness. The source of her joy became the source of her anguish. The very intensity of her sanctity made her sanctity suspected. She perceived a change in the demeanour of her spouse, and divined its cause. She found herself the subject of a doubt which chilled her spotless soul with deadly horror. But she was faithful to the secret of the Lord and would not betray it in her own interest. She knew that He who permitted the trial could deliver her from it, and she would not anticipate His time. Here was heroic faith and resignation. How can you expect to escape misapprehension and calumny? It is even a mark of the elect and a special blessedness (Matt. v. 11). In the worst trials never lose patience, or confidence in God the deliverer.

III. When God had tried these holy souls in the furnace of tribulation which always accompanies His highest gifts, and when they had profited sufficiently by this opportunity for exalted virtue, He sent them a heavenly consolation. They had not taken matters into the hands of their human prudence and out of the hands of infinite wisdom. They had not allowed the hastiness of human passion to destroy by premature interference the merciful plans of Divine Providence. They had cast their care on the Lord, and He had care for them. An angel appeared to St. Joseph, and with one word of explanation, cleared away the intricacies and brought him light and peace. Thus it often is with ordinary men. The mysteries of religion, or the conflict of duties and interests, or mistakes of action, involve them in most embarrassing problems. Their best endeavours only make things worse. But, in answer to the prayer of faith, God can send a sudden gleam of light that brings relief, and shows a way out of difficulties, when everything seems hopeless. "It is good to wait with silence for the salvation of God" (Lam. iii. 26).

12.—THE BIRTH OF OUR LORD.

I. Hitherto we have had the manifestations of the Divinity of the unborn Messias. Now He appears, and we have the manifestation of His Humanity. First, He is shown to be Son of David. From pagan Rome went forth an order, and "the whole world" was put in motion for the general census. The Blessed Virgin was compelled to journey from the North to the South of Palestine to obey the heathen emperor. That command did not contemplate the birth of the Messias. The enrolment of the Holy Family seemed a most insignificant detail to the Roman rulers, yet now it stands forth as the one historical result of that census. This brought about the fulfilment of prophecy, by transferring the birth of Christ from Nazareth to Bethlehem, and proved Him to be the Son of David. Mary was summoned as heiress of David in the line of Nathan, Joseph as heir in the line of Solomon; and our Lord's name was registered as inheriting His physical descent by Mary and His legal rights by Joseph, who was officially His father. How wonderfully does God turn the free actions of men to the fulfilment of His designs! How strangely do all things turn to the profit of the elect! Recognize the hand of God in all that happens to you. Observe further that the rights of Jesus are established under the cover of Mary's name.

II. Secondly, Jesus is shown to be the Son of Man. "You shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger" (Luke ii. 12). The second Adam does not appear before us as the first Adam does in history, a full-grown man, as if proceeding directly and entirely from the hand of the Creator. He does not appear, like another of His types, Melchisedec, as an isolated figure "without mother, without genealogy" (Heb. vii. 3). But He is a new-born Child in the arms of His Virgin-Mother. The swaddling clothes accentuate His weakness, and represent His mortality by their resemblance to the swathing-bands

in which when dead He will be enwrapped. So He is shown to be subject to the infirmities of our race The manger signifies a still lower depth. The misery of humanity is in some cases alleviated by wealth, and disguised by the pomp and dignity that some acquire. But Our Lord will have none of these. He will be superior to none, so that all may recognize Him as their brother. So He inherits all the lowliness and privations of humanity. Here again the Blessed Virgin invests Him with the emblems of His lowliness as well as with the proof of His royalty. Let the humiliation of Jesus move you to confidence in His love, and to contentment with those privations that He shares with you.

III. The Nativity also exhibits the Son of God as Son of Mary. The "Child" and the "Mother" are correlative terms; each suggests the other; they cannot be separated in our thought. The Blessed Virgin is no extraneous alien figure; she holds a necessary place in the mystery. Consider, also, that in the first ecstatic moments the Child belonged solely to His Mother. All led up to this. The forced departure from Nazareth, the exclusion from every house and caravanserai, the asylum in the stable, all carried out God's design that none should witness the miraculous birth, and that Mary should be the one depositary of the divine secret. She alone welcomed the King when He entered His realm. Our Lord was content with this. The greeting which He received from the faith and love of one immaculate soul was more adequate to His infinite holiness and greatness than the material grandeur of a palace, the homage of courtiers, and the acclamations of an unintelligent multitude. The Virgin-Mother represented the whole human race at that moment. Her homage compensated for the absence of all other. Our Lord could not have been welcomed more magnificently by all mankind and all the hosts of heaven. Join your worship with that of the Holy Virgin; ask her to supply for your deficiencies.

13.—THE DIVINE MATERNITY.

I. The association of God with humanity takes place under several different forms. Its highest expression is the elevation of human *nature* to the divine in the unity of the Person of Jesus Christ. We are united to the Divinity *individually* by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in our souls, and by corporal union with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. This did not exhaust the resources of God's power. He further raised one created *person* to union with Himself under the form of the Divine Maternity; this is the unique privilege of the Blessed Virgin. Her God was her Child. She gave human existence to Him who had created her. She gave to her Redeemer the blood which He shed to preserve her from sin. For a time He lived physically with her life; she lived spiritually with His divine life of grace. In a unique sense she could say with St. Paul, "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20). He was more her Son than in ordinary cases, for she alone gave of her substance to Him. And this Son was God. "The Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke i. 35). Isaias gives the name of her Child as "Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty" (Isa. ix. 6). How marvellous is this! Thank God for this new link that binds the human race to the Divinity. Adore the Divine Child who was God the Son. Reverence the blessed among women who was worthy to be the earthly Mother of God. Pray that you too may be closely united with Him in this life and the next.

II. Our Lady's dignity as Mother of God is intimately associated with the Divinity of Jesus Christ. The truth that Jesus is God and Man in one Person involves the other truth that Mary is Mother of God. Because she is the Mother of Jesus, therefore, He is proved to be a real Man; because she is the Virgin-Mother, He is shown to be true God. In early times the heresies that assailed the divine

character of Christ, generally did so under cover of an attack on the prerogatives of His Mother. Christianity, in defending the truth, could not separate the two causes of the Son and Mother The word "Theotokos," "Mary is Mother of God," summarized the faith of Christians in the integrity of Christ's double nature and one personality. Now, again, the two causes are associated. Denial of Mary's title leads soon to disbelief in Jesus as God; then follows the rejection successively of Christ's miracles, of the Bible, and of God. In devotion, as in faith, the cause of Mary is the cause of Jesus. Veneration and love of the one are inseparable from veneration and love of the other. If we truly appreciate Our Lord we shall esteem all that belongs to Him, we shall love all that He loves. When we honour His Mother it is so much honour rendered to Him.

III. The fact that Mary is the Mother of Jesus makes her also the Mother of men. Her position in the supernatural order corresponds to that of Eve in the natural order. There is a continual parallelism between the first and the second Eve, as between the first and the second Adam. In consequence of the sin, Eve's maternity was limited to our natural life. Her title of "Mother of the living" was transferred in its supernatural sense to her greater daughter, who introduced the higher life into the world when she gave birth to Our Redeemer. Thus she brought us to our second and spiritual birth, she was made the source of our life, and became our Mother in becoming the Mother of Jesus Christ. Our Blessed Lord is made "the first-born of many brethren" (Rom. viii. 29). We are His brothers; and thereby He takes our likeness, and communicates His likeness to us With that likeness He gives us a share in His relationships. His Father becomes our Father, His Mother becomes our Mother. Therefore, as regards this Blessed Mother, "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. ii. 5). Treat her as a Mother, and she will regard you as a brother of her Son.

14.—THE PURIFICATION.

I. In consequence of Adam's sin the origin of life was tainted; a curse had fallen on maternity. The child, the delight and hope of his parents, was a new addition to the ranks of sinners, and an heir to labour and sorrow. The mother's pride was accompanied by deep humiliation. She was accounted unclean, and for forty or eighty days she remained in seclusion, forbidden to enter the temple of God or touch any holy thing. Then she came as a transgressor to offer sacrifice for sin, and to be readmitted to the privileges she had lost. The Blessed Virgin was the first exception; in bearing her Divine Son, the Holy One of God, she had contracted no defilement actual or legal. She was the first one exempt from the law, but she submitted with wonderful humility to conceal her claims. Rather than contract defilement, she had been ready to forego the glory of the Divine Maternity, and now she resigns the credit of that which she valued so much, and places herself in the ranks of ordinary women. How strange that she, the Immaculate, should be accounted unclean, and secluded from all that was holy, because infinite Holiness had taken up its abode with her! So, in this world, must holiness always be secret, and the presence of God pass unrecognized. Nay, God's favours often become a reproach, fidelity is accounted a crime, good deeds bring more hostility on us than our sins. If this should happen to you for God's sake, "rejoice and be exceeding glad" (Matt. v. 12).

II. A second ceremony was the offering of the first-born son to God, as a tithe of thanksgiving for the deliverance from the avenging angel in Egypt. The Presentation of Jesus was the first instalment of His Sacrifice. He was carried to the temple, and there, by the hands of His Mother, was offered to His heavenly Father as the ransom which was to save us all from captivity and death. He

was not merely the first-born of one family, nor of the Jewish nation, but of all mankind; and He was offered as their substitute to sanctify them. The Holy Virgin in this mystery represents the Church and all humanity, offering in their name the Son of Man. No such sacrifice of sweet savour had ever before taken place in the temple; no priestly hands had ever been raised to God so stainless as those of the Blessed Mother who came ostensibly to be purified. Praise her for this high ministry which she fulfilled in the development of the work of Redemption. Ask her to exercise it in your behalf, to offer her Son for you, to offer you to Him.

III. Under this obscurity and humiliation there was accomplished a prophecy long expected by the Jews. The prophets had said: "Presently the Lord whom you seek and the Angel of the Testament whom you desire shall come to His temple . . . and who shall stand to see Him?" (Mal. iii. 1-2); and again: "I will move all nations; and the Desired of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory: saith the Lord of hosts" (Agg. ii. 8). Doubtless a grand manifestation had been designed by the Almighty. But the Jews had failed of their vocation, and hardened their hearts against their Messias. Necessarily, therefore, the great event was not carried out manifestly and magnificently, but in the measure required by their limited capacity. Only a few were able to look beneath the outward form, and see the hidden glory of the occasion; they were the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, Simeon and Anna. So it often happens that the accomplishment does not seem to correspond to the splendour of divine promise, and many take scandal thereat. But our acts have limited the manifestation of God, and curtailed its due effects. The judgment-day will show how different the course of history would have been, how bountiful the fulfilment of promise, and how successful all human life, if men had only been faithful to God, and guided themselves by His law.

15.—THE PROPHECY OF SIMEON.

I. The occasion of Our Lord's Presentation was marked by a revelation concerning His future, addressed to Mary His Mother by the mouth of Simeon. It had reference to the fact that, on that day, the chosen people were, by their own fault, unable to recognize their Messias. Other prophets, and Simeon himself just before, had spoken of the Child as the Salvation of God, a revelation of glory to Israel. Another aspect of the Messias is now set forth. For all time, He will be treated by a great number of those He came to save as an object of hatred and opposition. Human pride will for ever refuse to humble itself before the divine supremacy, human liberty will use its power to neutralize Omnipotence, malice will reject the divine mercies. "They have hated both Me and My Father" (John xv. 24), says Our Lord. In respect of those who so act, the work of Christ will be a failure; the bounty which is intended for the resurrection of all, will prove to be for the ruin of many in Israel; the blessing which was to have directed human evolution will in many respects be limited, in proportion to men's sinfulness. Here was another bitter drop in Mary's chalice; here was a sword of sorrow which was to rankle through life in her heart. When you meet with ingratitude or disappointment, or find that "mourning taketh hold of the end of joy" (Prov. xiv. 13), unite your sorrow with Our Lady's, and endure with resignation.

II. The Blessed Virgin was one heart and one soul with her Son. The Mother of divine joy was henceforth to be also the Mother of Sorrows, in union with Him who was the "Man of Sorrows" (Isa. liii. 3). The prophecy formally associates her with His sufferings and reproaches. "Thine own soul a sword shall pierce" (Luke ii. 35). This was a

greater dignity and glory to her than even her association with the Messias by natural relationship. It is better to be with Him on Calvary than on Thabor. All are willing to share His glory, few have enough generosity to share His tribulations. Mary, as the Mother of Jesus, would actually suffer, and would desire to suffer with her only Child. Knowing Him to be the Redeemer of the world, being closely associated with all His mysteries, she loved the souls whom He loved, and it was her privilege as well as her desire to suffer in union with Him for them. Suffering also is the price that is paid for God's special favour, and it must always accompany great sanctity, even independently of personal sins that have to be expiated. You can test your love for Jesus by your readiness to suffer with Him. Rejoice if He thus calls you into association with Himself.

III. All this was done "that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed" (Luke ii. 35). The contradictions of Our Lord serve to reveal the realities of human hearts. Even those who oppose Him most, help towards His manifestation in themselves and in others. As in nature the struggle for existence brings out the fitness of the survivors, so a painful test is necessary to draw the line between the sincere followers of Christ and crafty self-seekers. The contradictions of Christ supply that test. No one can follow Him without enduring part of His reproach. Persecution, human respect, our pleasures, our success in life and temporal interests are always tempting us to take a lower line and be unfaithful to our convictions. War is always in progress between truth and falsehood, virtue and immoralities, the Church and the world, the natural and the supernatural; and, in every case, it is Jesus Christ who is the sign that is either upheld or contradicted. All this has its utility for you. It is in this that the real thoughts of your heart will be revealed. Thus you are called to determine whether Christ shall be set for a sign of your resurrection or your fall.

16.—THE MARRIAGE OF CANA.

I. After an obscurity of many years, the Blessed Virgin appears again in company with her Divine Son at the marriage-feast of Cana. Like everything else in the Gospel, this event is the solemn teaching of great truths for the guidance of mankind. It is not a casual interlude, but it marks a definite stage in the progressive revelation of Our Lord. It shows us the relations between Jesus and His holy Mother, and the relations between her and mankind. It exhibits her virtues, her power of intercession, and the favours temporal and spiritual granted on her occasion. At this time Jesus was not yet manifested, He was only on the point of making the commencement of His preaching and miracles. His time, as He says, was not yet come. The intervention of Our Lady hastened that moment, and elicited His miraculous power for the first time. She alone knew who He was and had faith in Him, and she became the cause of the faith that was awakened in His disciples. Once again, as before, we find her presenting Jesus to the world, and in a manner opening for Him the second part of His career, by the miracle worked at her intercession. The Blessed Virgin is shown by this to have the function of presenting Christ to us and bringing light and grace into our souls. Beseech her to be present with you in company with her Son, as at Cana.

II. Consider the watchful care of Our Lady towards the hosts of the marriage-feast. She observes at once the deficiency of wine, she foresees the embarrassment they will feel, and promptly uses her influence as Mother of the Omnipotent to avert their trouble. Consider also that this was a case of merely temporal inconvenience. There was no great truth of doctrine to be enforced; it was not a question of establishing Our Lord's divine authority by a

public sign of power, nor of confuting His enemies, or gaining new disciples. There were no apparent spiritual reasons for such a miracle, although it proved afterwards, like good actions of every kind, to have spiritual effects. Learn from this, 1, that the Blessed Virgin exercises a watchful and affectionate care over you, and is ready to intercede and use her influence for you; confide therefore in her intercession. Learn, 2, that it is lawful to pray for merely temporal objects, God does not consider them too trivial for the exercise of even miraculous power. But He grants such favours with a spiritual object; that they may move us to faith and gratitude, and make us serve Him better. Act as Our Lady did, and you will obtain similar favours.

III. Consider the affectionate relations of Mary with her Divine Son, and His readiness to hear her. She addresses Him confidentially, showing absolute belief in His power, His benevolence of heart, His compliance with her unexpressed desire, leaving Him to select the moment and the method of meeting the difficulty. Our Lord answers in words which show that He wrought the miracle solely in response to His Mother's request. His hour had not yet come for miracles. They did not belong to the period of His subjection in the domestic life of Nazareth, but to the time, not yet commenced, of His life before the world as Prophet, Messias, and Son of God. His words seem to be a refusal, but to the Mother's unerring instinct they implied what Solomon, the type of Christ, answered to his mother: "My mother, ask; for I must not turn away my face" (3 Kings ii. 20). She acted accordingly and bade the waiters do as He should direct. Note here, 1, the excellence of the wine. So do our temporal affairs succeed best when we invoke supernatural aid. 2. Learn to trust Our Lord, and not to take it as a rebuff if He for a while delays to grant your petitions. Be sure that He will answer your prayers in some way.

17.—THE BLESSED VIRGIN ON CALVARY.

I. "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His Mother" (John xix. 25). The holy Virgin is only mentioned once again in the Gospels up to the hour of her Son's death; and here she is spoken of only by the beloved disciple, who beyond all others, had a deep insight into divine mysteries. Every circumstance here has a special significance. We must not see in this merely the mother overwhelmed by human feeling, and showing a superb fidelity, patience and love. Ordinary maternal instinct would either have kept her aloof from the fearful tragedy, or would have shown itself in excitement, and fainting and tears. But Mary "*stood* by the cross," silent, outwardly impassive, as fulfilling a part providentially appointed to her in this mystery. She alone knew what was really taking place. To others, the Crucifixion was, variously, either the execution of a disturber of the peace, or the martyrdom of a holy prophet, the triumph of wickedness in high places, the natural failure of another noble enterprise. They had no more spiritual understanding than the ox and the ass in the stable at Bethlehem. Mary alone recognized that the sufferer was God, and that this was the accomplishment of the divine plan for the redemption of mankind. Place yourself beneath the cross with her. Ask for spiritual intelligence of all the mysteries of Providence, so that you may see God acting therein, and that you be not like those who have eyes and see not.

II. In this mystery Our Lady had an important office to accomplish. 1. She was there to complete the offering of her Son which she had commenced on the day of His Presentation in the Temple. She presented Him as her Son and as the Son of Man; as her offering, and the offering of humanity. 2. As, through deficiency of faith and knowledge, no other person present was able to partake consciously in the act of sacrifice there offered, it was the duty of the Blessed Virgin to represent the whole of mankind, to assist

with full understanding and intense devotion, and to offer the acts of adoration, faith, detestation of sin, love and supplication, which were due from the partakers in the Sacrifice. The perfection of her dispositions supplied for and far exceeded all possible co-operation that mankind could have rendered. 3. She had to fulfil the Scripture that her heart should be pierced with the sword of the contradiction of her Son. She offered the greatest intensity of mere human suffering in union with the divine-human Passion of Jesus, and thereby she sanctified all our afflictions and united them with Our Lord's. Learn from the Blessed Virgin what your duties are in regard to the Sacred Passion, and unite yourself in sentiment with her.

III. The Crucifixion was not only the Sacrifice for sin; it was also the new birth of mankind to the spiritual life, frustrated by the sin of Adam, and deferred till the day of Calvary. It was the great vital action that completed the creative work of God in the world. Mary was necessarily present and bore a share in it; this was part of her work. The Nativity and the Crucifixion were one action. The Sacrifice of Christ began at Bethlehem; the new birth was completed on Calvary. Mary was concerned in both; and on each occasion she is present as Mother of the first-begotten of mankind and as the Mother of the human race. Our Lord declared this in His word to St. John from the cross, "Behold thy mother" (John xix. 27). This was not a mere private and temporal provision for His Mother's future; it had a spiritual signification, and concerned all of us. The Blessed Virgin was declared to be spiritually "the mother of all the living" (Gen. iii. 20); and on this occasion she bore her share in that consequence of sin, "in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children" (Gen. iii. 16). See the beautiful parallelism that there is throughout between the scenes in the garden of Eden and the scene on Calvary. Honour the Blessed Virgin for her share in counteracting the effects of the fall, and consider her as your second mother.

18.—THE OBSCURITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

I. At the commencement of Our Lord's life, the Gospels assign an important position to the Blessed Virgin, and exalt her glory. After this there is the long obscurity of the thirty years at Nazareth, enveloping both Son and Mother. Christ then emerges into full sight, and Our Lady remains in the background, appearing only in the three days' loss, at Cana and on Calvary. There are two references to her besides; where Our Lord says that His disciples are to Him both mother and brethren; and again, referring to her: "Yea, rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it" (Luke viii. 21, xi. 28). Further, on some notable occasions the Blessed Virgin is absent, from the glorification of Our Lord on Thabor, and from the last supper; and she is not mentioned in any accounts of Our Lord's appearances after His Resurrection. Thus the Blessed amongst women is passed over, she seems to be purposely ignored and even humbled. This is the mystery of her obscurity. Yet this is the best evidence of her greatness and holiness. She is placed in an exceptional position, and apart from all others who are sinners. Wonderful are the ways of God! He seems to abandon you when He is nearest; He shows His favour by chastening you; He humbles you in order that you may be the more elevated. Submit with faith and resignation.

II. Consider, 1, that Our Lady is sufficiently glorified for all practical purposes at Our Lord's birth and His death. She was His Mother and His best-beloved. What more remains to be said? After that, she has no glory but the glory of her Son. She shines by His reflected light; and the more He is magnified as God, the more is her dignity enhanced as His Mother. 2. The closeness of Mary to the glory of the Divinity necessarily obscures her brightness; as the splendour of the sunbeams lights up even the motes in the air but makes the stars beside the sun invisible. So too it was with St. John the Baptist, the greatest of the prophets and the nearest to the Messias. "He must

increase, but I must decrease," he said (John iii. 30). The great Precursor therefore wrought no miracles; he appeared suddenly out of obscurity, like a flash of light, and as rapidly disappeared. 3. For thirty years Jesus was Mary's own. But she belonged to His domestic life. As He left heaven, and sank for a while His relation to the Heavenly Father while working out our salvation; so, when coming forth on His three years' mission, He leaves His earthly Mother, and allows His personal relation with her to fall into the background 4. As He would leave the ninety-nine in the desert to save the one sheep that was lost, so He leaves the one whom He had already redeemed from every sin, in order to seek the ninety-nine. While He is silent during His ministry about His Mother, He lavishes praise and favours on sinners like Peter, Matthew, Magdalene, the Samaritan, and the thief on the cross. His mission then was to the diseased and the miserable, and not to the sound. 5. If Mary could have misunderstood, Jesus would have said like the Prodigal's father to his faithful son: "Thou art always with Me, and all I have is thine" (Luke xv. 31). What a comfort it is to you, a sinner, that Our Lord places you, in a sense, even above His Blessed Mother, and leaves her for your sake!

III. A picture requires deep shadows to show off its brighter spots; sorrow is necessary that we may appreciate joy; glory is greater when it rises from obscurity; so, supernatural greatness and holiness require humility and humiliation. Our Lord Himself is no exception; He was abandoned by His Father, as a prelude to being placed on His right hand, He passed through disgrace to glory. Such greatness as that of the Divine Maternity, conferred on a creature, required its counterpoise, its corresponding shadow, and this is to be found in the temporary obscurity of Mary in the Gospels. Jesus was overshadowed for thirty years by the fact of her Maternity; she for three years was eclipsed by the grandeur of her Divine Son. Be content with obscurity and humiliation if God sends it upon you. You cannot expect to escape, when Jesus and His Mother endured it.

19.—THE DEATH OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

I. "Wo is me that my sojourning is prolonged! I have dwelt with the inhabitants of Cedar; my soul hath long been a sojourner." (Ps. cxix. 5, 6). After the work of Redemption was accomplished, and Our Lord had returned to His Heavenly Father, His Blessed Mother still remained many years on earth before the term of her pilgrimage was reached. This period she passed at Jerusalem and Ephesus under the care of the Apostle St. John, to whom Our Lord had committed her. She lived in seclusion, taking no part in the business or amusements of the great world, conversing with God, meditating on the mysteries of her Son's life and Passion, gaining daily new stores of merit. She had been an example for maidens and mothers, now she became a model to the widowed and the childless, to the lonely and the weary, teaching them to wait patiently for the revelation of the glory to come. Unlike most of Our Lord's immediate friends and relatives, she was not to suffer a martyr's death, but she teaches us to endure the more painful martyrdom of living. She had duties also in the infant Church. She remained for a while as a visible memorial of its Founder, and the sole witness to the early stages of His Incarnation and life; she supplied the details to the Evangelists, and spoke as to the mind of Jesus, and directed and encouraged the Apostles in their work. Even if your life be quiet and retired, it is not therefore useless: it may be made useful to others, glorious to God, meritorious to yourself.

II. Death, long desired, came at length to her who was the "Mother of the living." Although it came upon mankind as the punishment of sin, the sinless Virgin was not exempted from this debt of human nature. She would not have desired to receive a privilege which her Divine Son did not enjoy. On the contrary, it was a delight to her to imitate Him in that respect, to offer her death as a sacri-

fice and an act of worship in union with His. In her humility she would have wished not to be distinguished above all others of the human race, but to undergo the humiliation of suffering the common punishment. But to Our Lady death was in no sense a penalty. It was not an object of anxiety and dread, but of hope and delight. It was not the ending of all things, as it is to so many, but it was the opening of her real and eternal life. It was not the corruption but the spiritualizing of her material body. The predominant sentiment of the Blessed Virgin was that of St. Paul: "I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ" (Phil. i. 23). The aspiration of her ardent love for Jesus was a force ever drawing her away from this life towards heaven; it gradually gained in intensity, and hastened the time of her departure, and at last drew her soul gently forth, to unite it for ever with Him whom alone she had loved and served. Learn to regard death as the Blessed Virgin did, with resignation, as the penalty of sin, with longing, as the revelation of Christ to you.

III. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Ps. cxv. 15). How much more beautiful and precious was the death of the Blessed Virgin! To the Apostles and the other witnesses, although a loss, it was full of consolation and edification. To herself it was her final triumph on earth, the end of sorrows, the commencement of glory. The angels surrounded her death-bed. The Lord Jesus was waiting for her soul, just beyond the veil, to reward her for all she had done for Him, to set the crown upon her head, to lead her into the kingdom and present her to the Eternal Father. The Holy Trinity welcomed her, and all the courts of heaven were filled with joy at the entrance of their Queen. Then "a throne was set for the King's Mother, and she sat on His right hand" (3 Kings ii. 19). Pray her to help you in your death that it be like hers. "Let my soul die the death of the just, and my last end be like to them" (Num. xxiii. 10).

20.—THE ASSUMPTION.

I. "Nor wilt Thou give Thy holy one to see corruption" (Ps. xv. 10). The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin's body into heaven was the last of her many earthly privileges. It was saved from the degradation of putrefaction, was raised to life, and united with her soul in glory. The Ark of the Covenant was a figure of Mary. It contained the word of God on the two tables, a portion of the bread which came from heaven, and the brazen serpent which saved the people from death, all of them emblems of Our Lord. That ark was of incorruptible wood, prefiguring her incorruption. The putrefaction of our bodies aptly punishes the corruption which we have deliberately introduced into our souls; it is fitting that all our comeliness and pride should be brought down to the awful hideousness of the tomb. Soul and body mutually act and react. The infinite sanctity of God the Son preserved His Mother from the smallest taint of spiritual corruption; and to this corresponded her preservation from bodily corruption. As "the corruptible body weigheth down the soul" (Wisd. ix. 15), so that soul which never suffered the death of sin, drew the body after it to a renewed life. Keep your soul free from the taint of sin, and its grace will overflow on your body. You will be freed from many of the physical evils of life which proceed from the degradation and foulness of the sinful soul.

II. "Arise, O Lord, into Thy resting-place; Thou and the Ark which Thou hast sanctified" (Ps. cxxxi. 8). The relation of the Blessed Virgin to the Son of God demanded her Assumption. That Ark on which He rested corporally while on earth was fitly associated with His Divine Presence in heaven. St. Augustine could not endure to think that the flesh and blood which had for a time been one with the flesh and blood of the Divine Humanity, should be left to putrefy in the grave. Jesus rendered to Mary according to her works; she had given Him bodily life on earth; He

in return gave her back her bodily life after she had surrendered it in love for Him. She received Him corporally into her home on earth, He took her corporally to His eternal home. Further, as the Blessed Virgin co-operated in the work of the Incarnation and Redemption, it was fitting that she should profit by it in a more excellent way; not only in the soul by her preservation from sin, but also in the body by her delivery from death. Her exceptional position also as to grace, dignity, and work on earth, was rewarded by an exceptional corresponding glory in her resurrection. Admire the justice and generosity in Our Lord's treatment of His Blessed Mother; and from this, judge of the generosity with which He will recompense your services.

III. The Assumption bears an analogy to the other mysteries in the life of Our Lord and the Holy Virgin. God's works form an harmonious whole; if we know some of His dealings, we may argue as to others, in grace as in nature. All was miraculous or exceptional with the Blessed Virgin, her predestination, her Immaculate Conception, her sinlessness, her virginity, her maternity, her sorrows. The end must be as the beginning, to make the series of God's works in her complete. "May the Lord keep thy coming in and thy going out" (Ps. cxx. 8). Her death must harmonize with all the rest. If Our Lady's body had "seen corruption," it would have been a greater breach in the continuity of the Incarnation series, than her Assumption is in that of ordinary nature. Further, there is, all through, a correspondence of Our Lady's life and mysteries with those of Christ. His Nativity, Obscurity, Presentation, Passion are reflected in her. The Ascension, likewise, has its counterpart in the Assumption. So too, the relation of your life to Our Lord's will find its parallel in your death. Your moral and spiritual position here will be the index to your position hereafter. Continuity and harmony must prevail in time and eternity.

21.—DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

I. Devotion, consisting of veneration, love and imitation, towards the Mother of Jesus is an integral portion of the Christian life. 1. It is a duty we owe to God. He manifests His perfections to us, not directly, but through creatures. We discern Him in nature, in mankind, in our own mind and conscience, in Holy Scripture; but besides this "God is wonderful in His saints" (Ps. lxvii. 36). Especially is He wonderful in the Blessed Woman who is the most perfect of all the works of His hand after the Divine Humanity. More than all other creatures, she is calculated to lead our minds towards God. Of her, more than all, we should say: "To me Thy friends, O Lord, are made exceedingly honourable" (Ps. cxxxviii. 17). 2. Christ and His Mother manifest one another. The more we realize that He is true God of true God, the more shall we appreciate her dignity, who was so closely associated with Him. The greater our esteem for the wonderful privileges of the Mother, the more shall we be impressed by the unapproachable sanctity of Him who demanded so much in her, and conferred so much upon her. She is made great by her Son and for her Son; the honour or the reproach directed towards her are reflected on Him. 3. As being thoroughly man, and as a model for all the relations of life, Christ's chief human affection was that which He felt for the Mother who gave Him life. By being devout towards her you will fulfil the command: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. ii. 6).

II. Devotion towards the Blessed Virgin is a duty that we owe to humanity. 1. Great services and virtues, high endowments of position or talents, reflect credit on the whole race; they call forth the respect and love of every generous soul, they are a powerful incentive to noble living. All ages and all classes have acknowledged the Mother of Jesus to be the type of all that is most pure, beautiful,

touching, and elevating, in the realms of history or poetry. Never was it more necessary to exalt this ideal, than in days when so many adopt their motives of action from the pig-sty and the dog-kennel. 2. Our duty to our neighbours requires us to see Christ in their persons and serve Him in them. If a cup of cold water given to the least of them is accepted by Jesus as done to Himself, much more will He acknowledge and rejoice in the homage that is paid to His Mother on His account. Recognize the Blessed Virgin as the chief of the elect, the most glorious of Adam's race after her Son, and as elevating the whole standard of humanity. "Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the honour of our people . . . therefore shalt thou be blessed for ever" (Judith xv. 10-11).

III. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin is a powerful means of grace to us on account of her office of intercessor and the great efficacy of her prayers. 1. An important duty of Christians, in imitation of Our Lord and in obedience to His Apostle, is to intercede for one another. Abraham, Moses, Job, interceded for others and saved them from the divine wrath; and this is one of the occupations of the blessed in heaven; as St. John shows us in the Apocalypse, where the ancients offer to God "vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints" (Apoc. v. 8). Especially is this the providential function of her who is the chief of all the blessed. 2. "The continual prayer of a just man availeth much" (James v. 16). Much more is this the case with the continual prayers of the Virgin full of all grace and justice, who brought sanctification to the Baptist, who obtained by her prayer the miracle of Cana, and to whom her Son said in figure, "My Mother, ask, for I must not turn away My face" (3 Kings ii. 20). By her intercession she is the channel of all the graces of her Son to us. You need her assistance. Ask her to be to you what Abraham and Moses were to sinners, and what she was while on earth.

BELLORD, James.
Meditations on christian dogma.

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